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# The UNPARDONABLE SIN

RUPERT HUGHES

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# THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

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Books by

## RUPERT HUGHES

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN
LONG EVER AGO
WE CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING
IN A LITTLE TOWN
THE THIRTEENTH COMMANDMENT
CLIPPED WINGS
WHAT WILL PEOPLE SAY?
THE LAST ROSE OF SUMMER
EMPTY POCKETS

---

HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK
Established 1817

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Mrs. Winsor clasped her close, and spoke to her motherly: "My dear, you are with friends. You have been ill, but we love you and you are well again."

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# *The Unpardonable Sin*

A NOVEL

BY

RUPERT HUGHES

*Author of*
*"We Can't Have Everything" Etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY
JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
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THIS STORY OWES MUCH TO

CAPTAIN JOHN FRANCIS LUCEY

TO WHOSE GENIUS AND SACRIFICE

COUNTLESS BELGIANS

OWE THEIR LIVES

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# ILLUSTRATIONS


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# THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

## CHAPTER I

THE streets of the little mid-Western town were pure gloom save for the occasional arc-lamps, strange incandescent fruit among leafage so thick that they gave off rather a white fog than light. Against their pallor the trunks of the veteran maples loomed black and flat, their shadows pools of tar.

Few people were abroad, and they were so vague in the gloom that they seemed not to be persons walking, but the floating shadows of beings hidden above. Yet their footsteps were audible as they approached and vanished, the rhythm broken by shuffles and stumbles over the hard ripples in the brick pavement.

It was impossible to see who was who, but the old lady on the Winsor porch knew most of her neighbors by their footsteps. There were Trigger-foot Pedlow and wooden-legged Major Rounds. But they were easy. She knew also the stealthy tread of Tawm Kinch, who always seemed to be saving shoe-leather, and the timid patter of old Miss Tiffin's spinstery feet forever fleeing when no one pursued.

Mrs. Winsor had sat on her front porch or at one of her windows for so many years that people's feet clicked their autographs for her on the sidewalk. She could tell when there was a stranger among them, if he walked fast. But to-night the few who were abroad went by so slowly that her ears could not read their names. This made her lonelier than usual, for her son was late, and the cook had gone out for the evening.



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The poor soul grew afraid to rock her chair: the noise alarmed her; it might attract burglars. She wished her boy would come home; she wondered what kept him. He should have been back long ago, to help her indoors. She was not supposed to be strong enough to walk by herself. If any of those wayfarers had turned suddenly into her gateless, fenceless yard, she could have reached the door with a scream, but she needed some such goad.

She might have called to somebody to help her in. But that would be advertising her solitude. She wished her son would come home. She had had a letter in the late mail, and she wanted to read it to him. It worried her keenly. She felt very old, very much afraid. In the sky there were flickerings of lightning, rubadubs of thunder.

Mrs. Winsor dreaded storms. The next might always be her last. She imagined the lightning stabbing the helpless lands beyond the horizon, and she imagined the people cowering there with no defense against their invaded sky.

She wished her son would come home before the rain broke over the streets. He was, as likely as not, standing out on the high bluff over the river watching the storm come. He liked to go up on high hills or sit on the roof and study the lightning, shouting to it with hilarious defiances that scared his mother like a sacrilege. His professor at the high school had called him a young Ajax, but his name was Oliver. Nearly everybody called him Noll.

His ambitions had a kind of glory about them. He felt things fiercely; he was a ferocious partisan of anything he believed in—his baseball club, his father's political party, the pattern of skates he wore, his ward school against the schools of all the other wards, his class in his school, his country against all the nations in the world in all times.

His mother wished that he would come home. The storm was advancing; the moon was enveloped—veiled—erased. The lightnings were flashing and fencing well inside the horizon. But yet awhile the air was still and warm, expectant, undecided. The air was in a Mona Lisa mood.

Mrs. Winsor was as helpless a spectator of the clouds driven in herds across the sky as of the phantoms drifting



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along the sidewalk. It was the lovers' hour, and occasional couples mooned by dreamily. She smiled as she saw two shadows blurred into one, moving in leisurely colloquy in spite of the omens of wrath. She remembered how she had once gone enarmed along dark lanes and streets. The maples had not been so high then, and electric lamps had not been invented; but the gloaming spirit was as old as Eden and newer than Edison.

From one dual shadow that blurred along she could faintly hear murmurs with a hint of smothered excitement—a man's diapason, a girl's boyish treble—but nothing she could understand. She followed the couple with her eyes across the alley till the huge blot of the great tree there absorbed it. The shadow did not emerge into the dim radiance from the lamp at the next corner. She supposed the twain had paused for another embrace.

Then she seemed to feel a little agitation in the air. She seemed to hear a choked outcry ending in a faint gurgle. There was a sense of motion within the tree-shadow, like a quiver in black smoke. She smiled. The girl was probably making herself a little more interesting by the immemorial feint of resistance. Mrs. Winsor had used those tactics herself in her time, though she would never have confessed it even to herself.

But now a single shadow, a man's, slowly withdrew from the shadow of the tree. The other shadow did not follow. As a patch of ink trickles away from a fallen bottle, the lone shadow flowed swiftly to the next tree-stripe, lost itself a moment there, then moved swiftly to the next, and so on tree by tree to the core of light at the corner, where the shadow seemed to be almost transparent, powdery at least. There it turned to the left against another line of trees and vanished behind the silhouette of the corner house.

All the houses seemed to ponder the riddle. The trees considered it.

Mrs. Winsor wondered what had become of the other shadow, but she stared into the gloom in vain. It was strange for a man to leave a girl there and run away. They might have quarreled, and she might have ordered him



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never to speak to her again, as girls do. She might have resisted a little too long, and he might have quit her cold. But then he would have marched away, or sulked along. There was something fugitive about this man's departure. And why didn't the girl go on home? Was she crying? She made no sound. Perhaps she was petrified with anger and was fighting her mad out, as Mrs. Winsor had done in her time, slowly in black silence.

Mrs. Winsor twisted her chair around and gazed with a kind of violence but with no success. The noise of her chair alarmed her. She began to fear things. The primeval dread of darkness and silence seized her. She wanted sound. Even the lightning made no noise now. She wished her son would come home and shield her from the horror of this quiet thing in the shadow. Perhaps murder had been done.

Then she heard footsteps coming up the right.

She knew their patter. Her son was evidently in a hurry. From his shade came his familiar voice:

"Mother! You've been alone. I'm mighty sorry. I couldn't help it."

She sobbed with welcome and put out her arms to him.

He was breathing fast. When he kissed her his lips were cold and tremulous. He opened the front door, made a light in the hall, lifted her, and helped her awkwardly inside the house. She loved the light; she was glad to hear the dear old front door slam; it was the portcullis-fall of her castle.

She reveled a little moment in her security before she could bear to send her boy out into the dark to see what was the matter there. Just as she was ready to speak she saw that he had been through an experience of some exciting sort.

She noted a bruise on his face—a barked knuckle. The thought went through her mind like lightning that he would have had time to run around the block and come home if he had been the shadow that fled from the other shadow.

Then he picked her up in his arms, and she marveled at the strength of what was once a babe at her bosom. What she had once carried now carried her.

He toted her up-stairs to her room; he knelt to unbutton her shoes for her, and she marveled at his meekness. She



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loved him with fear, and she wondered what life was doing to him. He was away so often, in such unknown companies. And she knew how much evil the small town held. The old know the world too well. The deep shadows, the quiet porches, the humble intrigues—she had encountered so much sickening knowledge in her years; such frightful facts emerged now and then from the shadows.

If her boy had been one of the ghosts under the tree, who was the girl? Why had he gone by without speaking to his mother? She told herself that if it had been Noll, he would have called out to her. At least he would never have stopped to quarrel at the very edge of the yard when he knew his mother was on the porch. Or if he had done all those things, they had meant nothing more than a foolish spat. The girl outside had probably hurried home.

The rain came now. And that would send her scurrying. Mrs. Winsor was glad to hear a good wholesome growl from the sky. But her smile went from her, for the thunder was followed by a scream, a kind of white lightning against dark silence.

Then there was a noise of footsteps, like a heavily running rain. They came up on the porch. The doorbell clamored.

Noll stood aghast a moment, then darted down-stairs. Mrs. Winsor heard him unlock the door, heard a man's voice in agitation:

"Hello, Noll. I want to use your telephone. Where is it? . . . Hello! Hello! Give me the police-station, quick! . . . I don't know . . . something funny. Hello! Is this Marshal Dakin? Say, Marshal, this is Ward Pennywell. Just now, as I was coming along Fourth Street—with, well, never mind—we stumbled over the body of a girl. She's dead, I think, or nearly—strangled to death, I guess. I lighted a match to see what it was I fell over. I never saw her before. Better come up. She's right outside Mrs. Winsor's house."

Mrs. Winsor's heart began to flutter dangerously. A gentler thunder groaned from the deeps of the night. The air was filled with silken whisperings and tappings of soft fingers. The rain was sorry.



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## CHAPTER II

THE old soul imagined everything now. Her faculties were stampeded with the wildest fantasies. Her boy had killed a girl, and she was the only witness. She would have to testify. One of those cyclones of scandal that tear quiet homesteads to ruins had fallen upon her little house. She cried out: "Noll! Noll!"

He called up the stairs, and ran up as he called:

"Don't worry, Mother. Something's happened outside. A girl—hurt—or fainted, I guess. Don't worry."

He had so little of crime in his mien that she felt able to think of other humanity. She said:

"You're going to fetch the poor thing inside out of the rain, aren't you?"

"Shall I, Mother? You're not supposed to move people like that till the police come."

"But it's terrible to leave anybody out in the—the rain."

The commonplace dread of wet clothes and lying on the ground in a storm outweighed the unknown significances of unusual tragedy. Noll said, "You're right; I'll go get her."

She checked him to ask, "Who was the girl that screamed —the other girl, the girl with Ward Pennywell?"

"I don't know, Mother. She ran home alone, I guess. I didn't see her. He didn't say who she was."

He was out and scuttering down the stairs. There was some hesitation below, then a hurry of footsteps on the porch, then a slower movement such as two men would make carrying a body in the dark.

Mrs. Winsor could not endure the suspense. She called her son again and again, but he did not answer. Under the stimulus of anxiety she rose from her chair and



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stumbled across the room. She lowered herself down the stairway, using the banisters and the wall like crutches.

She found Noll and Ward Pennywell staring at a girl stretched on a sofa. She seemed to be asleep rather than dead. The two young men seemed to be more impressed by her beauty than by her fate.

They turned in an almost guilty surprise as they heard Mrs. Winsor gasp. Noll whirled and turned to support her to a chair. She would not be checked from approaching the strange visitor. First she drew the skirt down below one revealed bruised knee. The skirt would not reach the shoe-tops; it was of a fine stuff. The stockings were of silk, the shoes of an excellent leather. Mrs. Winsor brushed a loop of hair back from the closed eyelids, took off the crumpled hat with difficulty, lifting the head in terror to take the long pins from the wet hair. She saw that the invader was dangerously pretty. There were raindrops on her face like tears, and in her hair like pearls. Mrs. Winsor felt that if the great eyelids were to open, they would stare in amazement, and the long pale lips would babble a strange story.

She put her old, cold hand on the girl's hand, and it was colder than hers. She could not find a throb in the wrist where the pulse lurks. She studied the palms; they were delicate, without calluses. The fingers were soft and slim, and the nails had been well kept, though they were cut close to the finger-tips. That struck her as odd. The finger-tips themselves were rather blunt.

She marveled at those hands; what instruments of terror they were! Hands can do—those hands might have done—such graceful, such hateful, beautiful, loathsome, terrible, exquisite things.

"We ought to send for a doctor," she sighed. "My doctor is out of town."

"The marshal will be here in a minute," said Ward Pennywell.

Mrs. Winsor sank back into the chair her son brought to her, and gazed at the peculiar visitor from nowhere. She said to Ward Pennywell:

"I heard a girl scream, Ward. It wasn't this girl."



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"No, it was—it was—the girl I was with."

"Who was that, Ward?"

"I think I hear the marshal driving up." He hurried out.

Mrs. Winsor turned to her son and spoke firmly: "What kept you so late, honey?"

"I'll tell you afterward, Mother."

"Do you know who this poor creature is?"

"No, Mother."

"Did you ever see her before?"

"I don't think so. There's the marshal. I'll let him in."

The marshal arrived, important with his office but very deferential as usual to people he was not in the habit of arresting.

"Evening, Miz Winsor. Kind of rainy to-night. Been looking like rain all day. Kind of looks like all night now. What's this I hear about finding a girl? That her? Humph! How'd it happen?"

Mrs. Winsor did not tell him that she had seen two shadows enter the shadow of the old maple, and only one shadow come forth and flee. She had an intuition that she ought to keep out of it.

She nodded to Ward Pennywell and let him describe how he was on his way home when he stumbled over something, lighted a match, saw what it was and lost no time in notifying the police. He said this with a sort of boastfulness, as if he were showing what a law-abider he was. He did not mention the fact that he was with a girl who screamed. Neither did Mrs. Winsor. Neither did Noll. Pennywell's eyes seemed to ask them not to. Mrs. Winsor felt that the mutual forbearance was a fair exchange.

The marshal stood and scowled down at the girl and pulled his long mustaches, as if to milk them of some intelligence. Mrs. Winsor stared from him to the girl and to the young men. The influence of that still white being, the very blossom of youth fallen from the tree, was strangely various.

All four were afraid of her, each with his own fear. Mrs. Winsor noted a kind of resentful anxiety in Pennywell's



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Mrs. Winsor felt that if the great eyelids were to open, they would stare in amazement, and the long pale lips would babble a strange story.

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eyes, as if he were blaming the girl for getting him into trouble and yet found her enticingly attractive.

Noll regarded her in a kind of ecstasy, his eyes seeming to touch her beauty and her grace with timid attention. Youth was seeing youth wrecked. Mrs. Winsor felt a new fear for her son; a son is a dangerous weapon that a woman forges for another woman's capture or protection or destruction. And Mrs. Winsor, having been a girl like this one, and after that a wife and a mother and a widow and an elder, understood how much of life this girl had begun and how much she had missed.

The marshal was both citizen and policeman, a sporting-man with a cynical experience, and a man of the law who must not be baffled. He cleared his throat with an effort at importance that only admitted his confusion.

"Kind of nice-lookin' kid!" he suggested. "Right smart of a dresser. Don't suppose she's just kind of fainted, do you?"

"Kind of" was with the marshal a kind of deprecating expression, a shading of too downright conviction.

"Put something under her feet," said Mrs. Winsor, "so that the blood will go back to her head."

The three men started with surprise at the command, and recoiled a little. Each waited for the other; then Noll went forward and, taking a cushion from the sofa, lifted the feet with reluctance a little, and stuffed the cushion under them. His mother was glad to see how this simple contact terrified him.

The girl's head was upheld by the opposite arm of the sofa. Mrs. Winsor indicated this with a gesture, and Noll with new qualms laid hold of the girl's ankles and drew her feet toward him so that her body slid along the sofa. Now her chin, which had pressed down like a bird's beak preening its breast, went back with the sudden motion of a spasm of agony, and her throat was abruptly revealed, long, slender, and pitiful. And now she seemed to have died indeed. The throat is the home of pathos, and hers was unendurable with tragedy.

Noll gasped and sprang away. The marshal leaned forward with a business-like determination. His coarse



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fingers went to the satin throat, and he bent close to stare.

"No sign of bein' choked," he said. "No wounds anywhere as I can see."

He lifted a hand and let it fall. The arm flopped, bending at every joint with a hideous lifelessness. Noll gasped aloud. The officer felt for her pulse and could not find it. Noll winced at his roughness with that delicate wrist.

The marshal waited awhile before he spoke again:

"Kind of looks like she ain't goin' to come to. She's gettin' cold."

That fatal, icy word sent a shiver through Mrs. Winsor. She knew what it was to have beings that had lived grow cold.

"I guess it's heart disease or p'ralysis," the marshal said. "I had a cousin just kind of keeled over once thataway. Maybe she was just goin' along the street when it kind of took her. Too bad!"

"But how about—" Mrs. Winsor had begun to ask, "But how about the man that was with her and ran away?" But she glanced at her son again, and he was shaken with such agitation that she clenched her lips on the words.

The marshal waited for her to go on. When she did not he said, "What say?"

And she merely asked, "How about sending for a doctor?"

"I guess we better. No need hurrying the coroner."

This ghastly word smote Noll Winsor like a club.

The marshal went to the hall, leaving the three alone with the girl. They felt unprotected, outnumbered by her terrible powers, with no officer of the law to protect them from her.

The marshal spent an eternity fumbling with the book.

"I'll go," said Noll, impatiently.

From where he stood in the hall he could see the girl lying like a form cast up by the sea. He turned from her, looked back. She must have danced well. She was so shapely. He rebuked himself for thinking of the shape of the dead. He felt that people must never dance any more,



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now that such beauty was ruined. Perhaps she was not quite dead. It seemed impossible that grace like hers should be brought to perfection only to be drowned in nothingness. The doctor might save her, if he came at once. Noll commanded his immediate presence.

Noll's haste brought a flare of joy in his mother's heart. He could not be impatient for the doctor's arrival if he were guilty of the girl's murder.

She only smiled, reproaching herself for the treachery of her suspicion. She wanted to tell him of it and beg his forgiveness. But the confession was impossible in Ward Pennywell's presence. And now that the doctor was coming she felt she had no right to tell the marshal of the man who had slunk away. The poor girl might be brought back to life, and be hurt by the publication of her secret. What the marshal got, the newspapers got. So she postponed again.

The marshal was studying the girl. He ran his fingers into her hair and about her head. The sensitive Noll, to whom a woman's hair was almost sacred, resented his profanation. But the marshal did not notice him. He mumbled:

"Skull's all right. She 'ain't been hit with nothin'—or throttled. If she was stabbed or shot there'd be plenty of signs. It's kind of mysterious. No sign of poison around her mouth. But she's kind of still and cold. Who is she, anyway? Any of you ever see her before?"

All three shook their heads. The marshal was shocked.

"I 'ain't ever seen her myself. Keep track of 'most everybody. I meet most of the trains. Nobody like her has stepped off one the last few days. Wonder who her folks are. I guess it's kind of up to me to search her for what the feller calls a clue."

He put out his hands, but they kind of retracted themselves before Noll made a leap at him; his only protest was a strangled groan. "Don't! Don't touch her!"

The marshal eyed him suspiciously. "What's it to you, young feller?"

"I can't bear to see your big old hands on her."

The marshal laughed sheepishly and said: "Maybe you



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better do the searchin', Miz Winsor. It's a kind of lady's job."

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Winsor. "I guess we'd better all wait till the doctor comes."

"I'll be going if you don't mind," said Ward Pennywell.

"I do mind," said the marshal. "Set right where you air!"

There was a long silence. Nobody spoke. All stared and waited for the girl to rise. But she did not budge. Her breast did not lift with a breath; her nostrils were as still as marble. Her attitude was one of such discomfort that a living being would surely have moved. Noll was tempted to go to her assistance, but he lacked the power.

By and by the door-bell whirred and Noll went to admit the doctor.

The silence in the hall was so profound that Mrs. Winsor could hear the rustle of the doctor's raincoat as he took it off and hung it on the hall-tree. He shook hands with Mrs. Winsor and then turned to the girl. He was amazed. He went in haste to her as if drawn by a rope. He gripped the girl's wrist, and his two finger-tips listened in vain for the pulse-beat; the other hand went to her forehead. He knelt down and peered into her face as if he would kiss her. He put his cheek close to her lips. He cupped his palm over her heart. He pushed back one eyelid, and he alone knew what color the iris was. He got no reassuring message from the stare that answered him. The pupil was dilated. The eye did not follow his. He lighted a match and moved it before the eye, with no effect. He put his cheek on the girl's left breast and rested there. He shook his head again. He opened the little hand-bag he had brought in from his car, took out a stethoscope, and, swiftly unfastening the girl's frock at the neck and throwing it back, set the instrument over the heart. Noll turned away with something of the terror of Noah's better sons, but Ward Pennywell stared like Ham till Mrs. Winsor glared him away.

"Get me a mirror, will you?" Doctor Mitford mumbled.

Noll ran up the stairs and ran down with his shaving-glass. Kirke held it in front of the girl's nostrils, then he



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stared at it, found a dim vapor on its surface and gave a little gasp of joy.

"She's not gone—yet!" he muttered. And now he was in a mood of snarling rapture. He was the young doctor challenging old Death to a duel. From his knees he spoke to Mrs. Winsor.

"I don't know what's wrong, but there's not much life in her. If I take her to the hospital in this cold rain—"

"Certainly not. The spare room! Noll, run up and make a light."

Noll hurried, but Mitford was right after him. He rose, gathered the almost soulless bundle of flesh into his arms and carried her up to bed as if she were a Sabine, the girl's nodding head and swaying arms hanging at Mitford's shoulder.

Mrs. Winsor hobbled out and labored up the stairs and was glad to find that necessity gave her strength. Necessity is the supreme tonic.

The young doctor called to Noll: "Take off her shoes. No, run fill a hot-water bag—two if you have 'em. Hurry! Mrs. Winsor, you might unfasten these infernal hooks while I take off her shoes and stockings."

Their struggle for her life rendered the ordinary delicacies contemptible for the moment. The waif had both a valet and a maid.

While Mrs. Winsor was at her task Doctor Mitford was in and out and up and down stairs, equipping himself for the contest. He snatched the hot-water bottles from Noll and sent him to telephone the drug-store for stimulants, the hospital for a pulmotor and a trained nurse, his own boarding-house for his electric battery.

He ran out into the kitchen and used the steaming kettle for a sterilizer. He filled his hypodermic needle. He turned the house upside down, but he gave the comforting impression that he was neglecting nothing.

In one of his charges through the sitting-room he was checked by the marshal:

"Say, Doc, just a moment."

"Can't spare a second, Chief."

"Hold on! I just want to ask you is they any use my hangin' 'round any longer?"



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"Not the slightest; you're absolutely no use—just in the way."

"All right. You needn't wait, neither, Ward. Consider yourself arrested or somethin'. I'll let you know when I need you. I'm goin' out to look 'round that tree with my flashlight, and see if she's lost anything that 'll give a kind of clue or somethin'. Night, Doc."

A little later the door-bell rang and Noll answered him. It was the marshal.

"Tell the doc I didn't find nothin'," he said, and left.

Noll sat on the top step of the stairway, pondering deeply, profoundly shaken by the invasion of this eerie ghost-woman. Meanwhile the young doctor, who had had none too much experience, was trying to make the most of his few weapons.

Mrs. Winsor, acting as a sort of chaperon, hovered about. She spent most of her time examining the girl's clothes for some clue. There was no dressmaker's label on her frock, no laundry mark on her linen. The name of the maker of her shoes was blurred.

There was just one bit of treasure trove for Mrs. Winsor. A silk money-belt was fastened about the girl's waist, and in the pockets of that she found several little clumps of money, new money that had never been spent even once—several thousand dollars in large bills—and two diamond rings. That was all she found.

She showed the wealth to the doctor. He pushed it aside brusquely.

"It doesn't interest me how much she's worth. The thing is can I get her back."

Mrs. Winsor struggled out into the hall and sank down on the step at Noll's side. She showed him the money and the money-belt. He counted it expertly—four thousand eight hundred and forty-five dollars. It was a larger sum than either of them had ever seen at once before in that house. Noll handled money in bundles at the bank, but this was different. Mrs. Winsor looked over her shoulder and gasped when the doctor opened the door.

"Come here, Noll, and help me," he commanded.

Noll restored the money-belt to his mother. She pushed it away.



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"For Heaven's sake, keep it. It frightens me to death."

He showed the money to Mitford.

"Put it up," said Mitford, "and take hold of her feet and help me carry her over to that couch by the light."

Noll suffered anguishes of modesty. He seemed to be committing a lynchable offense in embracing this young woman to whom he had never been introduced. She was in one of his mother's nightgowns now, and she was grotesquely pretty. She was so cold that she appalled him. There was a rigidity about her that chilled him. She was as awkward as a jointed doll.

He had never held a woman so; she was unutterably fearful to him, and yet somehow ineffably dear.

He prayed, for her and to her, not to leave him. He vaguely remembered Walt Whitman's lines to the wounded soldier:

> Hang all your weight on me—
> By God, I will not let you die.

He suffered cruelly with the assaults the doctor was making on the citadels of her soul's retreat. Mitford tried by loud noises, by flashing lights, to startle her to her windows. He set to her nose a bottle of ammonia that almost blinded Noll with its knife-like odor. Noll was nauseated with the loathsome shock of asafetida, but her exquisite nostrils showed no repugnance.

"Don't!" he growled at last. "You're hurting her."

"No, I'm not," said Mitford. "I'm trying to, but I can't."

After every effort Mitford stepped back, baffled yet somehow convinced by failure that success was waiting for the lucky try.

Noll thought of him as of one of the priests of Baal trying to lure his god to answer, while Elijah taunted: "Cry aloud. . . . Either he is talking or pursuing or in a journey."

Doctor Mitford had not awakened the first hint of life when the trained nurse came and took Noll's place. He had to leave the room. He felt as if he had deserted his charge. The door was closed on him.

He took up a vigil-place on the stairs. He heard strange



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noises in the spare room, which Mitford had turned into a laboratory. He wondered what they were doing, the nurse and the doctor. He knew that they were hurting her, or hoping to. There was so much pain on earth, it seemed better to let her sleep on out of the ugly world. And yet it seemed that her life was too precious to be surrendered, at any cost.

He fell asleep at last in the turbulence of his own emotions. He was wakened by Mitford's shaking his arm. The hall was lighted ambiguously by the gas and by the daylight round the chinks of the curtain. Seeing the desperate look in Mitford's face, Noll said:

"How is she? Is she—"

"She's not dead, anyway."

"Oh, thank God!"

"Don't be too previous. If it's the sleeping sickness, she'll just fade away. I'm all in!"

He stumbled down the stairway, and Noll caught his elbow to keep him from pitching forward headlong.

"What do you think caused her—death-sleep, or whatever it is?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. I've made a thorough examination. I can't find anything wrong. I wonder who the dickens she is and where the devil she comes from."

"Good night!"

"Good morning!"

Noll staggered to his own room. As he pulled down the curtain he saw the doctor clambering into his car.

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## CHAPTER III

WHEN Noll woke it was nearly ten o'clock. The sound of the door-bell roused him. He sat up in bed with a start and a flush of guilt.

He had heartlessly forgotten the new guest altogether. He was ashamed of himself, especially as it was the doctor whose ring had wakened him. His mother was awake, and had breakfasted. The nurse was a trifle jaded but still alert. Doctor Mitford was coming out of the room by the time Noll was dressed. He asked, anxiously:

"Is she alive?"

"Yes and no."

"What does that mean?"

"There's no sign of her waking."

"Drugged?"

"No."

"What put her to sleep?"

"I wish I knew."

"How are you going to wake her?"

"I wish I knew."

"How long will she sleep?"

"How can I tell? It may be for hours, weeks—it may be forever!"

"I should think she'd starve."

"She will if I don't find some way to feed her. If it should be the sleeping sickness, there's little hope. I've been reading that up. It's pretty nearly unknown among Caucasians except by importation from Africa, and it's nearly always fatal. A gradual emaciation ends in death without waking."

Noll's young soul rejected such a possibility as too cruel to be true—as if anything imaginable were too cruel to be true.



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"She's not going to die. Something tells me that!"

"Something-tells-me is hardly a prognosis," said Mitford. "But there's nothing to indicate the sleeping sickness. And there's nothing to indicate that she is unconscious from a blow. There's only one other theory left—hysteria."

"Hysteria? Why, I thought when women had hysteria they made a lot of noise and tore their hair and cried and laughed at the same time."

"Not always. Sometimes they have fits of sleep. They fall into just such a lethargy as this. They grow cold and white; the heart-beat is almost impossible to trace; they seem to be dead. And sometimes they have been buried in careless haste and have wakened afterward—"

"That's the cataleptic trance I've heard about," Noll said. "For God's sake, don't make any mistakes with her."

He stared at the girl with a new emotion. His glance was curious, dubious; his eyes quizzed her.

"Hysteria," he pondered. "That sounds kind of insincere. It's one way of shamming, isn't it?"

"That depends on what you mean by shamming," said Mitford. "Who can tell when the real ends and the sham begins? And when people are shamming, why are they shamming?"

"Because they are insincere, of course."

"Then why are they insincere? Back of the pretense is a sincere reason somewhere. What is that reason? Maybe when people only pretend, they are just as sincere as when they are perfectly candid."

"You're wandering round in circles, Kirke, shaking hands with yourself and telling yourself good-by. About as far as I can follow you is that you seem to claim that people have no self-control. Don't you believe that people are captains of their souls, as Henley said?"

"No, I don't!" said the doctor. "Henley wasn't the captain of his own soul. He was more like the passenger of his soul, and his soul was a passenger in his body, and it was a rickety ship at that. This poor girl, if she's shamming, must be the victim of herself or something—"



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"Or somebody, maybe!" said Noll, then wished he hadn't.

It seemed grossly unchivalrous to be standing so near to her and discussing her so frankly; for if she were indeed conscious, she must be overhearing their comments. Yet how could she be conscious and keep so still? The self-grip it would require to deny herself all motion, even to the longing for one deep breath, was inconceivable to Noll. His own chest ached at the thought. He had had pleurisy, and he knew the priceless luxury of a great free gulp of air. A spasm of protest went through all his muscles at the thought of so prolonged a voluntary immobility.

He beckoned Mitford to another room. "What sort of thing causes that sort of thing?" he asked, gropingly

"Some great soul-shock."

"What sort of shock?"

"Oh, a sudden disillusionment, a terrifying insult or—oh, anything that may shatter a young woman's innocence or faith in somebody or in herself—some sort of mental lightning-stroke that causes a spiritual lockjaw."

This opened all the riddles of sphinxdom.

"What on earth could it have been in her case?" Noll groaned. "Who on earth is she, anyway?"

Who she was, and whence, and whither bound, and why—these were problems that had also disturbed Marshal Dakin.

Doctor Mitford canceled all the marshal's suggested theories of drugs, knock-out drops, knock-out blows, and poison-needles. The marshal, eager to do something and arrest somebody, suggested taking the girl into custody as a vagrant. Doctor Mitford sniffed at that and reminded him that she had money in abundance. That assured her the marshal's respect.

"Maybe I better put Ward Pennywell in the cooler awhile."

"For what? No crime has been committed yet."

"Well, I feel like I kind of ought to be doin' something. Suppose I send out a general alarm to find out who this girl is. I can put a description of her on the wire to Chicawga, Sent Louis, Sent Paul, Sent Joe, K. C., N'York,



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Denver—all the big places. How would you describe her? Or wouldn't it be best to have a photograph taken? I'll send up somebody."

"No, you won't," Noll broke in. "You let her alone. Suppose you send the alarm all over the country and all the newspapers print the story, and her picture, and she wakes up, and finds that she's notorious everywhere. She may be just some nice young girl going home from boarding-school, or called back by her sick brother, and she may have lost her way, or lost her head. You'll ruin her life for her. You've no right to expose her to the world that way. Besides, she's a guest in our house."

The marshal was human and a father, and like other policemen was addicted to all-day siestas taken standing or slumping in a chair, with bits of excitement few and far between. When Doctor Mitford urged that his patient must not be disturbed, the marshal consented and sauntered back to his chief occupation, waiting for something to happen.

At the jail, however, he went over his lists of missing girls for whom advertisement or confidential inquiry was constantly made. There were portraits of escaped criminals, clever forgers, badgers, shoplifters, bigamists, poisoners, convicts. But none of them resembled ever so faintly the dreamer at the Winsors'.

So the marshal tipped his chair against the whitewashed wall and resumed his characteristic attitude, ambiguous between sodden slumber and intense Oriental umbilical meditation.

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## CHAPTER IV

NOLL remembered with a start that he was supposed to be working down at the bank. He flung off the spell of the witch up-stairs and dashed to the dining-room for a snatch of breakfast.

He gulped his coffee and his eggs and cornbread, popped a kiss on his mother's cheek and hurried down the street, reading the morning paper as he went, for Chicago and St. Louis morning papers reached the town so early that they had driven the local journals into the afternoon and into the confines of neighborhood news.

This paper, as was the habit of that period of the war, was bristling with the stories of German triumph in arms.

Noll was glad of the German victory, for three reasons: first, because it would make the bank president, Mr. Bebel, more amiable toward Noll's tardiness, since Bebel was a German; second, because Noll's own mother was German; and finally, because Noll himself was for her sake pro-German in his sympathies.

He was heart and soul American, and all his father's people were native to the soil far back into the 1600's. His paternal ancestors of various branches had landed in Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas, had drifted west to Kentucky and Tennessee and then northwesterly into Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa.

But his mother—Meta Wieland was her name—had come over from Germany as a little three-year-old girl with her father and his two brothers, fugitives from monarchical oppressions after the unsuccessful struggle for liberty in 1848.

Meta kept no trace of her German birth in her accent, but her father kept her heart full of love for the Fatherland, and though he hated the Prussian autocracy to his



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dying day, he adored the more the home from which he had been exiled. His motto was the motto of Kant, "The rights of man are the apple of God's eye on earth."

Among all the counterclaims of love and hate Noll's heart remained that complex thing we call American. When his father died, his mother drifted back to German affiliations. In the mid-Western world where Carthage was there were many Germans, solid, peaceful, likable, lovable people, for the most part. Their broken English had a familiar and comfortable sound.

English born and bred people were almost unknown and the English accent was thought of as an Eastern affectation. An English lord in Carthage opinion was one who said "Fawncy!" and "Baw Jove!" incessantly, misapplied his h's with opeless hignorance and thought that "Hall Hamericans were Hindians, doncherknow."

Of the French the Carthage people had only a few—an amiable jeweler and his wife who were really Swiss and a nervous French teacher or two. But it was well accepted in Carthage that with the exception of Lafayette, the French were universally timid, volatile, immoral, universally addicted to the nude in art and the untranslatable in literature. All Frenchmen wore pointed mustaches and pointed goatees, ate frogs, and shrugged their shoulders.

Of the Belgians they knew nothing except what they had heard of the Congo atrocities, which even in the report were no worse than the treatment of the Indians and the negroes, but being foreign and recent were regarded with stupefaction. Russians and Austrians were myth simply. Italians were all road-builders or hand-organists with monkeys. The Balkans were something not understandable at all.

Such was the cosmogony and ethnology of Carthage when the war broke out. The Allies had far less friends than the Germans there, in contrast to the East.

The counterweights against full sympathy with Germany were a sense of contempt for the ridiculous pretensions of the Kaiser, a memory of German hostility to America in Samoa and in Manila and throughout the Spanish War, and a vague acquaintance with the oppressive militarism



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of the Prussians. The Kaiser's mustaches were a joke, and the goose-step was a favorite thing to burlesque. The Kaiser was blamed for starting the war and turning hard times into panic.

The mid-West, which abominated Mexican cruelty and spoke of Villa as worse than an Apache, was suddenly bewildered to see Villa outdone by the tender-hearted, music-loving, science-fostering Germans. Men, women, and children who had been brought up to believe that the Americans had done a noble deed when they ambushed the British after Lexington and Concord, who had been proud of the embattled farmers for blazing away from every stone wall and rail fence at the uniformed troops of their king—these people could not understand the policy that burned towns and shot hostages by the score because, forsooth, certain Belgians were accused of firing from windows and fields at the invaders of their soil.

And now England, hastening to the rescue of Belgium, lost her old name of tyrant and became a savior. The French, who had been thought of as weaklings because their petty third Napoleon flung them into an unpopular war and their cheap generals led them into traps and surrendered them wholesale—the French were suddenly redeemed in the far-off mid-Western opinion by their sublime *levée en masse*.

It was then that the sweet and peaceful name of "German" was cast aside for the indignant sobriquet of "Hun."

There grew a vast tempest in the simmering teapot of Carthage, and the Germans were hard put to it to uphold their claim on respect and affection. The blacker the crimes of one's nation, the whiter seems the duty of upholding them against alien criticism.

Noll was troubled enough at first, and he kept quiet during the first turbulent discussions. But when the talk began to run wild that atrocity was natural to the Germans and that all Germans were Huns, his heart suddenly blazed with the fiery truth that his beloved, adored, devoted, ineffably revered mother was a German. And then he grew fanatic in defense.

It was all the Kaiser's fault that Noll Winsor came



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home late the night before with bruised knuckles. He had gone to the Y. M. C. A. after supper for a few games of pool. And on his way home he had dropped in at the soda-fountain where the beauty and chivalry of Carthage were wont to convene.

Duncan Guthrie, all dressed up for a party, happened in also to get some courtplaster for a cut he had inflicted on himself in shaving for the dance. He had lingered for a little chatter with a few of the common herd who were, like Noll, omitted from Edna Sperry's invitation list.

Since the European war affected every conversation, it came up here, and Guthrie tossed the word "Hun" into the discussion. Noll, in fealty to his mother's fatherland, answered with heat and pressed the debate to a point where fists became arguments.

He sent Duncan Guthrie spinning among the tall stools and the wire chairs about the little tables.

Having proved the thorough gentleness of the Teutonic nature by another bit of *Schrecklichkeit* and having been ordered from the drug-store by the neutral pharmacist, Noll had gone home to his belated mother and the events of the night before.

He thought of these things this morning as he hastened to the bank, reading of the swift German capture of impregnable Antwerp and the flight of the British by the water and of the Belgians over the back fence on October 10th.

Mr. Bebel, the president, was so rosy with this proof that the war would be brief and glorious that he smiled fatly at Noll and accepted his apology with a jovial "*'S macht nichts aus.*" That was, indeed, one of the Carthage names for a German—a Moxnixaus.

When Noll went home that afternoon he found guests: old Professor Treulieb, the music-teacher—tall, lean, florid—his roly-poly wife and his daughter, Isolde, a young woman as sweet and graceful as the violin she played.

Old Treulieb had a ferocious temper alternating rapidly with a ferocious tenderness. He had endured for years the piano-side martyrdom of a Teuton from the Leipzig



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Konservatorioom trying to rap into the knuckles of young American animals the ah-bay-tsays of moozeek.

Noll had been his despair. Noll loved music—but he would not practice it. He had calf-loved the old professor's daughter Isolde when they were both young, but the girl's tireless devotion to her fiddle and her scholarship in music had terrified him.

She had wakened a brief fire of jealousy in his breast a year before when one of Noll's German cousins had visited Carthage. Noll's mother had a sister who had gone back to Germany as a girl to school; she had married there a man named Duhr and raised a large family. One of her sons, Ignatius, a lieutenant in the Reserve, had visited America on some official business or other which he kept secret. He had taken advantage of this visit to travel all the way to Carthage to see his dear Tante Meta. He had spent many days there in Carthage marveling at the oddities of mid-Western civilization. He had fascinated Isolde Treulieb and many other girls.

Ignatius—or Nazi, as his aunt Meta called him—had thick, babyish lips and soft hands, and cheeks with a daub of dollish red in them. He had kissed the girls' hands—and their lips, no doubt—when they walked out into the moonlight with him after the dances in which he whirled them giddier than ever with his top-spinning style.

He had sung them the songs of Schubert and Schumann and Franz and Hugo Wolf—the tenderest Lieder ever written—all about *Ish leebe dish*, and *Doo beest vee eine Bloome*, *Zo holt oont shane oont rine*, and the song in which it said, as he explained, "Dytschland is vair de peebles speak Dytsh," and he had recounted how the girl "kissed the youngk man in Cherman." Many of the Carthage girls wanted to know how that was done.

Old Treulieb had played Nazi's accompaniments, and Isolde had sometimes played an obbligato on her violin with heart-searching tones.

Nazi Duhr had left a void in the town, and the word *German* had since meant *homesweetness*. His name haunted the feminine memory like an echo that would not die.

But Noll remembered him with resentment as a too-



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competent rival. In his pique he had neglected Isolde and turned his heart to other girls, fluttering from this one to that. And now Edna Sperry had turned him down, and his heart might have reverted to Isolde if he had not been under the obsession of that girl up-stairs. He resented the presence of callers who would keep him from the study of that pretty puzzle who had come in out of the dark and brought with her clouds of mystery.

This afternoon the Treuliebs were in some agitation. Noll kissed his mother and shook hands all round and asked why they were so solemn on a day of such triumph.

His mother said: "I have been reading a letter from my poor sister. From Germany it is just come. It is very sad."

Mrs. Winsor pulled her spectacles down from her forehead and translated, slowly, dolefully:

"DEAREST SISTER MINE:

"Surely now the world comes to an end. This great war has brought already destruction on our home. What becomes of us God knows only. So soon the mobilization order comes out, the pension of my husband from the old war with France where he takes his wound is stopped. He goes by the savings-bank for money; the bank will not pay. All my three sons are called to their regiments, the Thuringian regiments. My daughters' husbands are called to theirs.

"My son Nazi you remember from his visit to you. He loved you much. He is gone away. The sons of the neighbors, all have marched away. Such tears, such tears! I have outwept my eyes. And now comes the hunger. The horses are taken. The men are gone. How shall we live? There is little food in the country and in the cities yet less. Where to get to eat man knows not. I have one only comfort: my heart is old and bad, and I shall not live much more.

"But for my children what is to happen? Nothing but wounds for the dear boys, and for the girls hunger. Yes, we are now hungry. If you can send me a little money, please! Remember that your sister is hungry. I do not know if it can reach us through the English blockade, but send money a little. Remember your sister is hungry.

"Ever lovingly,

"KONSTANZE."

Meta's weak voice trailed away into silence. She shook her head, and tears slid down along her cheeks. The only sound was the drip of her tears on the letter that she held in her hands.



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Noll felt suddenly the glory of victory tarnished. The word had an evil sound. The plunging splendor of the battle-front hid almost as much woe at home as it created ahead.

Old Professor Treulieb groaned "Hunger!" not with the English but with the German pronunciation. It seemed to have more pain in it, a more animal sound—"*Hoong-er!*"

Being among Germans, he felt privileged to break into one of his tirades: "And now comes it! At last the war they have wanted and worked for is here. No more moosic, no more art. Shootingk only. To kill men! It is the Kaiser who does this, *der oberste Kriegsherr!* He begins by burningk Louvain and Malines, where Van Beethoven's peoples comes out. Beethoven, when he writes his 'Eroica' symphony, inscribes it to Napoleon, the soldier of liberty. When Napoleon makes himself emperor, Beethoven tears up the paper. He did the right. The Kaiser will bringk more sorrow by Germany as Napoleon did. More people he will kill. *Ach Gott*, where ends it now?"

His wife, always hunting comfort, tried to mitigate his frenzy:

"Be glad now that we are in America, where the war cannot come. Here we have music. Isolde learns a new piece only yesterday yet. Play it once, Isolde."

Meta weakly seconded the invitation. Noll insisted, opened the violin-box, took the violin out, led the dismal professor to the piano-stool, caught Isolde by her long, potent hands and dragged her to her feet.

Thus constrained she played, but with elegiac pathos though the piece was the light serenade by Drdla. High, soaring tones, honeyed double stoppings, ethereal harmonics —all gave gaiety a sorrow in beauty.

As she was fluting forth the harmonics, the trained nurse appeared at the door and spoke with some asperity:

"I beg your pardon, but would you mind not playing? Those high notes seem to disturb my patient. She moves in her sleep, and it makes her shiver!"

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## CHAPTER V

ISOLDE was covered with chagrin and regret. She hastened to put the fiddle away and to explain that she had not known that any one was ill in the house.

Meta made the explanations, such as they were, and the Treuliebs were voluble with wonder. At length they went home; Noll could hardly endure their deliberation at the door.

It had not occurred to Noll at the moment that instead of making Isolde stop playing he should rather have made her keep on, since the doctor had exhausted his ingenuity trying to shake off that leaden stupor. The doctor would call in the morning. The news could wait.

At dinner Noll's mother talked only of her sister's wants. She felt remorse at the simple food of her own table. It seemed gluttony to be feasting while her sister starved. No one could have dreamed how long that fast would endure. Everybody counted on a brief and bloody campaign and a long and futile peace-conference. Noll promised that he would send money at once to his aunt Konstanze. Bebel had ways of getting funds to neutral countries and thence over the border.

When at length his mother had been put to bed and for his sake had pretended to go peacefully to sleep, Noll found himself lonely and abandoned.

The nurse asked him if he would listen at the door now and then while she went out for a breath of air.

He moved about his room softly lest he wake his mother or disturb the guest—though his mother was wide awake, and the guest would have resisted the trumpets of Jericho. A theory occurred to Noll that he might trace her origin by taking the numbers of the bank-notes she had, especially as the money was new. He took the money-belt from



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concealment, counted the bills through again, noted down the numbers and the years. He might find thus the bank that had received them from the Treasury.

He was about to push the money back into the pocket of the belt when he noted that the machine-stitching along one seam had been replaced by a bit of hand-sewing. Inside the lining he felt something crisp—probably more money. He hesitated—then opened the seam and took forth a letter.

He debated about reading it, but not for long; curiosity was backed up by many better arguments. The letter would perhaps tell the whole story and give him the address of the girl's mother or father or some guardian.

With trepidation he began to read. He noted that it was another letter from a sister to a sister, but from youth to youth. The paper was of foreign make, but the writing and the language were American. There was no date, no name or place, no postmark. This was the letter:

MY DARLING LITTLE SISTER:

You may never get this letter, and perhaps it would be better if you didn't. I can't decide what to do. One minute it seems too cruel to write and the next too cruel not to write. So I send it and trust to God to decide.

Oh, my dear little sister, the only bright thing in the world is the thought that you will escape what Mamma and I have had to go through.

If you never know what became of us, you will suffer and wonder and perhaps try to find us. If you do know, you will suffer more terribly for a while, but you will know the worst, and you will give us up as if we were dead—calmly, sweetly, beautifully dead. It's not being sure that tortures the most; so I write to let you be sure of us.

And now I must tell you. But how can I write it? I can't—I just can't.

This is the second day. I couldn't write you any more for two reasons: First, I couldn't—that's all there is about it; and second, they came and interrupted me—the Germans.

We were all so scared here when the war broke out and we learned that Belgium had been invaded. We could see from the convent windows the fugitives stumbling along the roads carrying all sorts of things. Some of them were so pitiful we cried—some of them so awkward we couldn't help laughing. And now I don't think I'll ever laugh or cry again. Pretty soon we began to want to join the flight, but the Sister Superior said that if we weren't safe in a convent there was no safety anywhere. But we heard such horrible things and saw the horizon red with fires.



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Then suddenly Mamma appeared. I couldn't believe my eyes. To think that she should cross the ocean just to get to me! While all the other Americans were stampeding for home, she was fighting her way to me. Oh, it was good to see her and hold her to my heart. It was sweet and brave of you to let her come, and to stay there all by yourself, but I wish you hadn't let her come.

She wanted to start back right away, but the horses we arranged for were carried off by a raiding party and we waited for others. Then came the Germans, like an everlasting gray river. We didn't dare budge. We peeked at them from the windows. They went by and by forever. At noon those that were near halted and had their dinner from big cookstoves on wheels. Then they moved on.

The second day some of them halted for a long stop. There were battles at a distance, and some firing near us. The officers came to the convent looking for spies, they said, and for civilians with arms. They told the Sister Superior how they had shot innocent men because that is their way of discipline by terror: the innocent must suffer for the guilty. For what guilty ones did Mamma suffer, I ask God, and get no answer.

One regiment—I won't tell you its name—settled down near the convent. There was terrible carousing by some of the men and the officers. They jeered at the Catholics. They treated the priests like dogs and shouted horrible things at the sisters. They began to reel up to the gate demanding food. They insisted on going through to search for spies. When the Sister Superior said there were none, they called her names.

One of the novices tried to run away after dark. We saw her from the window. A few men caught her, and others came up laughing and tried to take her away. They were told, "She is ours. Go get one of your own." The others howled with joy and came running to the gate. It was dark. There were screams and laughs.

I was so scared. Mamma tried to hide me somewhere. But they found us in a little cell. They fought each other, and then one of them laughed: "The mother is not so bad." They drew lots. I can't write. I hope you don't understand. I wanted to kill myself, but my religion made me afraid to murder myself and die as I am.

They went away, and I saw Mamma and tried to hide, and she tried to hide from me. And we cannot yet look in each other's eyes, though we cling together now after they have been here. For they have no mercy.

That wicked regiment marched away, and another halted. These officers were different. They beat the men who insulted us. The Sister Superior told what had been done, and one of the officers wept, and promised protection. But he marched away. And others came —more brutal even than the First Thuringians. They were bitter against the Belgians, and when I said that Mamma and I were Americans, they only laughed. They came here as if for their meals.

What the future will bring I don't know. Mamma and I are to be mothers, and we don't know who the—so many—I can't write—I can't die. Don't tell Daddy when he comes back, if he ever does.



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Tell him we were killed in the burning of this town, and you had a letter saying we were dead, and lost it. Of course we won't speak to the American Ambassador or to any one. So many have been killed and will be killed that we shall not be missed.

Good-by, blessed little sister. We shall never see you again. Think of us as if we were what we wish we were—dead. Mamma tried to tell me to send you her love, but she is choked with weeping. Good-by, my sister, oh, my sweet sister. Don't try to find us, for we shall not be here long, and we want never to be seen. God be kind to you.

The young man in the quiet little room on the serene little street in the sleepy little town sat and wondered that the world could bear such things. He was dazed and stunned. He sat idle, and mused.

He was beyond horror. He pondered merely that the girl who slept so well in the other room had started from somewhere to go to her mother and sister, and somehow had fallen down in this street, had fallen under her cross.

Who was she, and whence? He knew her whither now. She must be wakened for her holy mission—she must be sped upon her quest. She must save that mother and that sister from those—Huns! He started. He had said the word himself—the word that he had fought another man for saying. But what other word was there?

What could the world do with such a power? What could he do alone against it for this lonely girl? He could not help going into the room to look at her.

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## CHAPTER VI

INDIAN summer ruled for its little smiling-while, and warmed the early night of fall with a pleasant dream of October remembering April. The long belated spring wind was as impudently inappropriate as youth astray in a graveyard. It crept through the lifted window and teased the light ringlets of hair about the ice-white brow of the weird girl who had drifted into Noll's life as curiously as the spring wind that blew through the October trees.

They had told Noll that she only slept, but she gave no proof of life. He thought of the old tradition that hair does not die with the body. He wondered if it were true. He was at the age when he was finding out that traditions are not often true. But the hair of the girl before him was so uncannily merry and the girl so mournfully still.

The frightful letter that he had filched from her money-belt seemed to explain death but nothing more, and young Winsor kept asking that silent figure silent questions: Who are you? Where are you from? What brought you here? What robbed you of your life at my door, of all the doors in the world?

She did not answer. There was no motion visible to his keenest scrutiny except that light and frivolous flaunt of curls at her brow, a mockery of gaiety about a face where frozen anguish gave youth and symmetry a dreadful beauty. She seemed herself engaged in deep revery, locked motionless in complete devotion to one thought.

If he could only waken her! He bent and spoke in deep, low tones, lest his mother hear him in the other room.

"Who are you? Tell me! Tell me who you are. Let me help you!"

But she gave no sign. Once by inadvertence his lips touched the delicate conch of her ear, and they were



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chilled as if they touched frost, burned and chilled as if they touched frosted iron.

Noll was afraid of the mute witch, afraid for her, afraid with her. He was young too, and without love. He longed to be able to help some one. She seemed to need him. But he could not get word to her that he was there.

He sank into a coma of helpless thought. He read and reread the letter till he had to put it from his sight in his pocket. He put in another pocket the money-belt his mother had found on the girl's body. He fell so still in his meditation that he grew almost as lifeless as the girl was.

He was so lost to the room, the town, the world, that when the nurse returned and from habit tiptoed into the room and whispered, "I'm back; I was detained," he was as startled as if he had fallen out of a dream.

He sprang to his feet, knocking his chair backward with a clatter that made his heart race. He was afraid that he might have startled the slumberer. He forgot that his one ambition was to break into her sleep. He looked apologies toward the girl, but there was no stir about her except the little ringlets at her temples.

The nurse, Miss Stowell, whose business it also was to get the patient awake, kept whispering too, and asked, "She hasn't moved?"

Noll shook his head and would have mentioned the letter he had found but that the nurse, yawning and eager to be asleep, dismissed him with a nursish authority.

"You needn't wait up any longer."

She bustled about, dressing the couch, patting up a pillow and murmuring:

"I'll just make myself comfortable and—and read."

She had no book, but she said she would read!

Noll, disgusted, went to his room. He thought he ought to speak to Miss Stowell about the letter, but as he turned, he heard the key click in the lock. He sniffed at the dubious compliment she paid herself and him in the precaution.

He sank down on the edge of the bed and unfolded the letter, but was too tired to read it again. It had worn him out with its terrific story. He hated to think that the pretty



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young girl in the other room had seen it and had understood such things. He wondered what other terrible knowledges were stored up in that whist soul of hers. His brain exhausted its strength with the energy of its wonder.

He blazed with an ambition to go to the rescue of the sister smothered in an avalanche of disaster, though he would have had to cross land and sea and dash backward through time.

The maddening thing about the situation was that the letter contained no mention of places or people except the name of the Thuringian regiment, and that had slipped in through an evident oversight. He had no idea where to go to rescue whom. He simply must get a few names. It annoyed and baffled him not to know what to call the sleeping girl. To think of her as "the girl" or as "she" was becoming unendurable. He would have to make up some title for her. He wondered what the name of the Sleeping Beauty was. He wondered if he might wake this poor little Snow White with a kiss.

Perhaps Doctor Mitford would be able to resuscitate her in the morning at least long enough to ask her who and why and whence. But if not, if she should never open her eyes and her lips, whom could he notify? Where could he send her exquisite clay but to an anonymous grave?

The next morning Noll went to his mother's room. She had an unbidden guest to worry over, and the knowledge of her sister's woes in Germany belittled her own distresses. She reminded Noll of his promise to start money on its way to her hungry sister Konstanze. Noll reassured her, but his feelings were bitter against all Germans this morning. He wanted to tell his mother that it was his aunt's own fault if she starved. Why did she select such a country to be born in? Why had she brought up her sons to be parts of the German machine where every man became a mere soulless cog and rolled on when the engineer pulled a lever and gave the word *Vorwärts!*

Already an individual experience was turning him against a whole race as readily as he had been turned for it by another individual experience. In other countries old admirations were suddenly turned to contempt; old friends



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Isolde could not bear to look, but turning aside, played with all her might.

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were being regarded as Judases because their nations had ranged themselves on the opposite side. People were hating even the beloved dead, the artists, the poets, the saints of the hostile tribes, and loving their ancient hates because of their alliances.

Noll remembered a legend that the Kaiser, having cut his finger once, had let it flow a moment, saying, "Now I've got rid of my English blood." Noll was tempted to free himself of his German heritage by the same ingenuous device.

But he excused his mother from blame. After all, he told himself, her father had been good enough and wise enough to abandon such a country, and his mother had been good and wise enough to marry an American. He helped her down the stairs to a chair by the window as if he forgave her something.

As he was about to leave the house, Doctor Mitford arrived. Noll found it hard not to speak of the letter, but he held his peace. It was his mother who mentioned the odd fact of the nurse's complaining that Isolde's violin had disturbed the sleeper.

"Disturbed her how? When?" Doctor Mitford gasped.

"Yesterday afternoon," said Mrs. Winsor. "I'm so sorry."

"And what did you do?"

"Isolde stopped playing, of course," said Mrs. Winsor.

The doctor roared: "Of course! Damn it—excuse my French. But why didn't somebody tell me of this?"

"It didn't seem important. We expected you to call."

"Important! That nurse is a fool. Where's Isolde? Get her as soon as you can!"

Isolde could not come till afternoon. Noll found her strangely altered overnight. In her wistful ashen meekness he saw a Hunnish motherhood, the sort of future *Hausfrau* who would take her place meekly as a stolid breeder and trainer of Hunlets and Hunlettes into a state of idolatry for the Emperor and his God-given anointed powers. She would breed more subjects for an Emperor who said that his crown came not from peoples or parliaments, but from God direct, an Emperor who was sublimely ludicrous enough to treat the great wise manhood of Germany as



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priests to his glory and consign all German womanhood to the four *K's*, the service of *Kirche*, *Kleider*, *Kinder*, and *Küche*. Isolde's little Hunlets would grow up and fall into line, march past the Kaiser at the goose-step and salute him with their toes, give him their lives as his due and take from him with gratitude what crumbs of privilege he swept from his banquet-table.

Doctor Mitford explained to Isolde what he had called her for. He did not know what Noll knew, and Noll took an almost malignant delight in his monopoly both of the information and of bewilderment. He was like a scientist who is puzzled about things that other people do not even know that they do not know. Noll was conceited about his higher ignorance.

Isolde took her violin from the case, asked Noll to "give her the A" at the piano, brushed the quaint fifths with her thumb and struck a Venus of Milo attitude plus a pair of excellent arms while she steadied the violin against her thigh and tightened or loosened the pins, brushed the strings again, tightened the pins again and so on till she had the instrument in accord.

Then she took up the bow, drew a sweet phrase or two from the singing strings and said, "I am ready."

She followed the doctor up the stairs, and Noll followed her. She was excited with a new kind of stage-fright which did not diminish when she entered the room and saw before her her most unusual audience of one. The mad king of Bavaria when he befriended Wagner had been wont to have operas performed for him alone in the empty opera-house where he hid somewhere behind the curtains of a box: Isolde's mission was to find her solitary auditor still more shy, still more hidden. Noll had once been very fond of Isolde, and it did not help her to see that she was now hardly more than a musical instrument for the sweet awakening of another love.

"What shall I play?" Isolde whispered.

"You don't have to whisper," the doctor said with a twang that jarred. "What did you play yesterday?"

"The 'Serenade' of Drdla, I think," said Isolde. "Wasn't that it, Noll?"



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He nodded, and she began, faltered, and paused to say, "It doesn't sound very well without the piano."

Mitford motioned her to go on, but it needed all the resolution she had. She could not bear to look, but turning aside, played with all her might.

At another time Noll would have seen how fair she was, and modeled with as clever a scroll-saw as had fashioned the violin she held under chin and cheek.

She played with shut eyes, her body bending and swaying as her left hand tapped the strings with uncanny wisdom and her right arm with the bow for a long eleventh finger kept up its seesaw always in the same plane. It was uncanny that such manipulation of such a machine should educe from a box tones beyond the magic of the nightingale that sings sometimes of nights in Avon near Shakespeare's tomb.

While the beautiful girl played to the beautiful girl, no one seemed to hear Isolde or heed her, the sleeping girl least of all. It was she that the two men and the nurse watched, all eyes.

When the last note ended with no success visible the doctor cast a reproachful glance nurseward, and Miss Stowell protested:

"I'd have sworn she moved yesterday."

"How?"

"Her eyelids seemed to—well, throb, and her mouth quivered."

"It was probably your imagination," Mitford grumbled. "But try something else, Isolde."

"What shall I play, Doctor?"

"How should I know? What do I know about fiddle-music?"

"What shall I play, Noll?" Isolde pleaded, and then remembering a tune he had loved once when he thought he loved her, she began the "Liebestod."

Noll flushed. It seemed hardly the time to be raking up old follies. She had played it for her cousin when he visited America.

"No, play the—the 'Träumerei.'"

She played it, and also that cavatina of Raff's, a familiar



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bit of Mendelssohn's concerto, a part of "The Kreutzer Sonata," Bach's "Chaconne," and various other garments from the well-worn wardrobe of all fiddlers. She played, of course, the "Humoreske" of Dvôřák and also Maude Powell's arrangement of his poignant lyric "Als die alte Mutter."

But the soul on whom this serenade was wasted would not come to the balcony. Mitford grew dogged and insisted:

"Try something more cheerful."

She played Fritz Kreisler's "Caprice Viennoise," a reminiscence of the time when Vienna was the home of all cheer, not the fountainhead of blood.

The composer was lying in an Austrian hospital even then after being wounded in battle and trampled by Russian horses whose hoofs threatened the future of that priceless arm. Later he would recover and tour America, devoting himself and his art to the conduct of a fund for foreign musicians interned in Austria, so that music should have some other life in the war besides "The Hymn of Hate" and the clangor of march tunes.

Isolde played the "Caprice" deliciously. It was a rich mingling of tinkling bell-tones and sirupy harmonies;, so gay and so tender it was, that it inspired what Dante called "the saddest of sorrows, the remembrance of happier things."

The doctor grew tired of watching for an effect that was not achieving. He turned away in disappointment. But Noll gripped his arm and whispered, "Look!" He turned again to the girl and saw that among the lashes of one eye there was a spot of wet light. A tear grew and globed and slowly, tarryingly, slipped down her cheek into her hair, where it glistened a moment in jewel brilliance, then vanished.

The eloquence of it was beyond words or music. It quenched with its own pathos the joy it created.

"She weeps! That proves she lives!" said the doctor, not meaning to stoop to an epigram or rise to a sentence.

"Play it again—the same thing!"

Isolde's violin repeated the "Caprice," but now it carried new and solemn connotation, as a light song does when soldiers have sung it on their way to the wars.



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On the repetition, however, the music evoked no glint of a tear, no token of any response till the end of it, and then there was barely manifest a slow, a very, very slow, prolonged, mournful taking-in of breath and a deep, complete, deliberate exhalation—that strange business with the air that we call a sigh.

"Play it again! Over and over!" the doctor stormed.

Isolde fought silence with melody under the whip of the doctor's excitement till her muscles ached and her spirit was fagged out. She played and played, weakening like a groggy boxer. Her skill and her toil had no further influence on that rigid taciturnity. Noll knew why, or thought he did. There were sorrows in that heart which the feigned and artistic woe of music could not reach.

"I can't—play—any—more."

The watchers over the slumberer heard a faint cry and looked round to see Isolde collapsing to the floor in a swoon. By instinct her arms sheltered her violin instead of herself, and she fell heavily. Noll ran to kneel and pick her up, but the doctor thrust him aside and left her on the floor. He placed a cushion under her feet, and the blood ran back into the machinery of her brain. Then she began to cry hysterically.

Doctor Mitford was regretful of Isolde's defection, but enough had been accomplished to prove that the girl's soul was not altogether inaccessible.

Isolde accepted her dismissal with characteristic meekness and left the room. Noll went to the door with her. He waited while she wrapped the fiddle in its silk swaddle and set it in its cradle.

Suddenly he remembered that the only name mentioned in the letter was that of the First Thuringian regiment. He remembered the words, "Others came who were more brutal than the First Thuringians." He said to Isolde:

"Isolde, you remember my cousin Nazi Duhr?"

Her blush answered before she stammered:

"Yes—yes, of course. Why?"

"Do you remember what regiment he was in?"

"It was— Let me see— Wasn't it— Yes, Nazi was in one of the Thuringian regiments. Why?"



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"Oh, nothing; I just wondered."

Isolde mused: "Do you suppose he is fighting? Of course he is. Isn't it awful? He might have been killed."

"If he hasn't been, he ought to be," Noll growled.

"Noll!" Isolde gasped. "Why do you say that?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Are you still jealous of him?"

"Maybe I am. I guess I am." But he was not thinking of Isolde.

Isolde smiled sadly. "*Auf wieder*—"

"Good-by!" Noll snapped.

He stood on the porch as she wended her way along the street, but his eyes were turned inward with thought.

He was thinking about the victim of her music, seeing again her tear and her long, deep sigh. The idea flashed into his brain that the violin had not so much wakened her from inanition as it had invaded the intense activity of her thought, had disturbed her at her meditation as a catchy tune had often interfered with some precious mood of his own or annoyed him when he was casting up accounts.

That was what the girl up-stairs must be doing. She had reason enough for profound consideration of a life where such infamy was possible.

Noll had read somewhere the old dogma of certain theologians who were content to imagine a God who was content to spend His eternities in the contemplation of His own glory. If so much time were needed for infinite wisdom to debate its splendor, surely a few days of utter repose were not too much for a girl to spend in a study of the problems raised by such a cataclysm in her little sphere.

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## CHAPTER VII

THE wonder was not so much that she should be overwhelmed by such a disaster as that she should survive it at all. It seemed to Noll strange that the whole world was not stunned by what had happened and was happening in Belgium. Yet "Business as usual" was still the watchword around the globe, while atrocity was piled on atrocity in a little realm innocent of war and ignorant of its approach.

Suddenly Noll seemed to see Belgium itself, and all the peace and security of mankind as the shattered victims of just such outrage as had crushed the girl asleep. The conscience of America must be asleep, too, to have tolerated it and accepted it as merely sensational news. Noll felt his gorge rise at the nausea of things. But he felt also that he was on the way to an understanding of Doctor Mitford's patient.

The doctor came down the stairs now with that particular way doctors have of coming down-stairs from sick-rooms, smuggling a load of bafflement in a sack of confidence. He went out to his little old-fashioned car, cranked it up, was about to get in, remembered something he had forgotten to tell the nurse, and hurried back into the house and up the stairs. The engine of his car went on chuckling like a cozy sewing-machine.

Noll was struck by a notion that the girl's body was like that. The driver was away, "up-stairs" somewhere; but the engine, without budging from its place, ran on and on and would run on as long as the gasolene did not fail.

It was an odious sort of fact. But mysteries must be reduced to mechanism if they are to be solved. The main problem now was to recall the driver of that car to the wheel before the engine wore itself out.



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When the doctor came down again Noll asked him, "Well, what do you think now?"

"Just what I thought."

"Just what was that?"

The doctor had thought and unthought several theories.

"It's a plain case of hysteria," he said, "a form of somnambulism, a fit of sleep."

"How long will it last?"

"God knows!"

"How long can she live without food?"

"She is being fed artificially now. Six times a day with a mixture of beef-extract, white of eggs, glycerine and whisky. That will keep her going for a while."

"How do you explain her—trance?"

"Only fools can explain things. Wise men merely study them, describe them, and watch how they work."

People nowadays like to know what their doctors are driving at; so Noll ventured:

"I wish you'd tell me a lot about hysteria."

"I haven't the time to, nor the ability," Mitford confessed. "I don't know much about it. Nobody does. But I've got a few books with the latest guesses on the subject. Want to read 'em?"

"Indeed I do!"

"Come over to the office and help yourself."

Noll got into the car, and at a touch of the hand the engine gripped the axles and the machine left the curbstone with a leap. Noll felt that somewhere there must be a lever that would set the sparks to flying also in that stationary soul up-stairs.

Doctor Mitford took Noll to his office, and finding other calls waiting, left him alone with the most terrifying literature ever written, the psycho-analytical works describing the aberrations of the human mind and its mutual enemy the body.

These were not the occult balderdash of the all-credulous who endow the subconscious mind with divine powers beyond the reach of the conscious, nor the inane chortlings of infantile glee over senile transcendentalisms. These were the ransackings of the lower brain, the dust-bin and



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garbage-barrel of memory, where, as in other garbage-cans, disease lurks and the products of waste and carelessness ferment.

It was hard for a young small-towner to meet on a plane of high intelligence these investigations in mental sewage or to regard them as the purified and purifying sciences that they are. The language appalled him alternately by its technical jargon and by its bluntness. Its Œdipus-complex, its libido-principles, symbolisms and dream-explanations offended him to wrath.

Hours afterward, when Mitford came in to find Noll buried under a landslide of new ideas, Noll broke out:

"If this is science, give me a nice, sweet fertilizer-factory. The scheme seems to be to sprinkle the Greek dictionary over a heap of smut. This fellow Freud builds everything on the memories people don't remember. He nags at some poor half-witted wreck till he drags some ghastly thing out of the past, and then he's as proud as Little Jack Horner. He pulls out the plum and says: 'What a great boy am I! Now you're cured.' He bases it all on erotic repression. He ought to be repressed himself."

The young doctor smiled with an ancient tolerance. "Wouldn't it be a pity, though, if the prudishness of narrow-minded people like you should prevent science from investigating these ailments? They're much more common than you dream of, Noll.

"Even as a child you knew of fearful things that any novelist would be lynched for mentioning. They're mighty important. Some children can't forget their black pages, and the battle between primeval instincts and the moral lessons they learn is a frightful battle to some poor souls. People set themselves a fleshless standard, and suffer hideously when they fall back to nature. They try not to think. They sprain their brains and rupture their pride. The memories fester like abscesses, find outlet in unsuspected places, fill the system with poisons.

"It does them a marvelous good just to tell somebody all about it. It's exactly like lancing an abscess. The old secrets come out like pus. The psycho-analysts call this cleansing process the catharsis. Some souls need a



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brisk cathartic as well as some bodies do. That's all there is to psycho-analysis. It's nothing to be so horrified about.

"You are not morbidly moral; you don't worry over your childish mistakes. But numberless quiet, respectable people are seething with struggles inside their souls. Secrets are better out than in, especially if they're foul secrets. And so this patient of mine—of ours—"

Noll broke in hastily: "None of that, now! Don't try to pin any of those ghastly Freudian tags on her. These psycho-fellows seem to have minds for nothing but the dirty and the eccentric."

Mitford was patient with him: "You're making what Stanley Hall calls 'the complicated protest of normality.' But whatever that girl's secret is, secrets are poison. Some people tell them to the priests and do their penance, but the doctors ought to be told about thoughts as well as pains, for thoughts are symptoms, causes as well as by-products of disease."

Noll knew that the girl had a secret, and a venomous secret, but it did not concern her own conduct. It was from without. He protested:

"You're barking up the wrong tree this time. These Germans don't understand us Americans. But maybe they know their own people. Let 'em keep their ugly science and turn it on themselves. Come to think of it, this Freud fellow may have the explanation of the Prussian atrocities in Belgium. That may be an explosion of erotic repression. The race has been studying too hard and being decent too long, I guess. They had to go out on a terrible drunken spree. They'll have a frightful head when they wake up, and my God, what remorse!"

"That sounds funny, coming from such a pro-German as you."

Noll realized that his eloquence had carried him too far. His sudden and ferocious change of heart had come from reading the letter he had found. He had felt that he had no right to tell even the doctor of it. It was the girl's own wish that it should not be seen. She had secreted it herself. It was shame enough for Noll to have read it; to tattle would be contemptible: yet he could not explain



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his abrupt about-face without disclosing that document. He mumbled:

"I was just talking to hear my own voice. Anyway, we're getting nowhere with this poor girl's case You told me these books might help me to understand her. There's nothing in them that has anything to do with her trouble."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Mitford. "She has suffered some big crisis that has overwhelmed her. She wants to forget the whole world. She is trying to be dead without dying. She is suffering perhaps from what Pfister calls a 'traumatic repression.' Sleep is her disguise, her form of self-protection. The only way I can imagine to get her out of this frightful despondency would be to extract her secret from her."

Noll was uneasy. "How would you do that?"

"By a mild hypnosis, perhaps."

"You don't believe in that old fake, do you?"

"Not in the vaudeville circus-tricks nor in the Sunday-supplement miracle stunts. The honest hypnotists admit that they can't compel people to do anything they don't want to. But sometimes they can persuade some poor scared souls to have self-confidence, just as generals hypnotize armies. I don't know much about it, but I'm going to work along that line—unless you want to send her to some big nerve specialist in Chicago or St. Louis."

"We oughtn't to neglect anything. But—how much would he charge?"

"Oh, five hundred dollars or so. It's a good deal to pay for a doctor, but it's cheap for a soul."

The thought of taking the girl out of his life brought a gasp of protest from Noll. "You do the best you can, and if you fail we'll get the best doctor in the world."

"You might take home this book of Janet's on hysteria," said Mitford. "It's French, but perhaps your German prejudices will excuse that. It was written before the French made their outrageous attack on Germany through Belgium."

Noll winced at this. He was finding that repression is actually a strain upon the soul.



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He took Janet's book home with him. And that night after dinner he went to his room to read it. He was first impressed by that amazing clarity of the French mind, which seems to find it as hard to write a cloudy sentence as the German to write a clear and graceful one. He was fascinated, too, by Janet's theory that the true hysteria is a form of somnambulism and that the noisy outburst is rare. He studied and studied till he had literally hypnotized himself into a deep and dreamless stupor.

He slept late into the next forenoon, and the Sabbath air was shaken with church-bells when he woke. His mother felt that since she was able to be about the house she was able to resume her church-going. She was all Sundayed up when Noll finished his breakfast, and she asked him to go to church with her. He begged off with a smile.

"Thank you, but I've had sleep enough for one morning." Later he told Miss Stowell that if she wanted to go to church he wouldn't mind watching the patient.

Miss Stowell was one of the black sheep of her white profession. She always wanted to go anywhere that was out.

Noll made sure that the cook was absorbed in the big noon dinner of Sunday before he went to the terrifying door. He paused; then, after guilty hesitance, he knocked with formality—no answer; he stepped in with timidity.

There she lay, a waxen effigy. The nurse had bathed her and brushed her hair and spread it out on the pillow. She had just begun to braid it when she decided to take Noll's advice. Noll closed the door after him and tiptoed forward with the mingled feelings of a ghoul in a graveyard and an Orpheus going down into Hades to fetch forth Eurydice.

He drew a chair close and with utter trepidation spoke to her. The sound of his voice alarmed him. He half expected her to spring up and shriek. She made no more sign than a statue addressed.

Recalling the doctor's purpose and hoping to anticipate him, he murmured, slowly, tenderly:

"You will get well. You will get well. You will get well."



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It was his breath now that stirred the hair at her temples. That was all the influence it had.

He varied his theme: "You must wake up soon. You must wake up soon."

He said this a hundred times with a fanatic obstinacy, and at last he would have sworn that she heard him. As one sometimes stares and listens with such eagerness that the senses seem to thrust forth tentacles instead of waiting passively for power to come from without, so his thought seemed to crackle like a wireless telegraph, shattering space with long, rhythmic feelers, trying to attune some other instrument to its repeated S O S.

He hammered at her ear with murmurs that grew louder and louder, "You *must* wake up *soon!*" He did not know that people going by on the street paused and wondered at the noise.

If he could only call her by name! He tried various names at random: "Mary! Rose! Susanne! Catherine! Kitty! Kate! Alice! Edith! Ethel! Helen! Elizabeth! Dora! Clara! Lucy!"—all that he could think of. He had no answer. If there had been only a name in that letter! There was just one. He dreaded to try it, but he was desperate. He leaned close and called:

"The First Thuringians! The First Thuringians! The First Thuringians! The Thuringians!"

When he had kept this up until even those words were gibberish his heart stopped suddenly, for her eyelids shivered. He thought he saw her make one quick catch for breath. Her hand moved fitfully as if to brush away a gnat.

Then it fell back lifeless; she resumed that baffling rigidity so grimly that he hardly knew whether he had really seen her lashes quiver or had only breathed on them, whether her hand had moved or he had only imagined the gesture.

He put all the power of his heart into the reiterance: "The Thuringians! The Thuringians!"

His throat grew husky with fatigue, but he said to himself, "I'll say it ten times more and stop!" And afterward he said it again and again, renewing his pledge and



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the breach of it alternately. At last, abruptly, a convulsive shock ran in icy ripples down through the coverlet above her. Her hand twitched and went up. There was a little whisper:

"Mamma!"

And nothing more! The lips relaxed; the hand fell. Noll was so frantic that he gripped her by the shoulders lest she sink back and drown in oblivion again. He seized her and shook her with frenzy and dared to shriek to her again:

"The Thuringians!"

And now she trembled indeed. The breath throbbed in her bosom. Her mouth opened and panted like the beak of a thirsty bird. She sat up quickly as if she were called or alarmed. A bare foot came forth, pink and shapely, its instep high-arched. It sought the carpet and he saw once more that bruised knee before he turned his eyes away. When he could not help looking again, the girl was standing by the bed. She was wringing her hands and gazing about as if she were trying to imagine where she was and how she had come there.

He spoke the word again. Now she caught his arms and clung to them with the palsy of a child waking in a nightmare and clutching at help. But her eyes stayed shut and her words were clamor that he could not understand. Once more he smote her with "The Thuringians!"

She was so startled that a smotheringly sweet, amazingly abundant billow of hair tumbled down about her, covering her face. She was not cold and remote as she had been, but warm and silken and timid. She tried to run, dragging him with her, but she was weak from being so long abed; she toppled, and he had to hold her as she made a feeble burlesque of flight. And now she grew articulate with panic, babbling:

"Mamma! Mamma! Where can we hide? Quick—where can we hide? I can't bear it again. Kill me. Please kill me, Mamma! Then you can kill yourself. Or I'll kill you first. No, we mustn't do that, must we? If we did that we should never see poor little Dimny in heaven—nor papa. For their sake we must bear what God



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sends, and He'll take mercy on us by and by. Yes, we must live."

Noll realized that she thought herself to be her sister. He was stupefied at the new problem. She went on muttering with a ghostly frenzy:

"Papa, don't let them take us! Why did you go so far —so far—and leave us so helpless? What will he think when he gets back from the North and finds that you are not there, and that the war has broken out and we can't be found. Poor daddy! Poor little sister! Thank Heaven she's safe out in Los Angeles. Oh dear! Oh dear! Hush, Mamma! We mustn't cry so loud or they'll find us! Shh! Shh! Hide behind me. Let them take me and they may not look for you. Shh!"

She tried to put Noll back of her and to shield him. He was too weak with pity to resist her. He was too weak to keep from weeping. She heard his sobs and thought them her mother's and tried to offer comfort and strength —bent her head and petted Noll's hand. Then she froze again.

Noll could feel that her eyes were opening, that she was staring at his hand. She put back her hair and, turning her head, followed his arm to his shoulder. She twisted about in his embrace and stared full at him. He had never seen such eyes. They grew tremendous as they found sight and recognized him for a man. She stood aghast for a moment. Then she flung back and tore his hands away, and when he reached for her again she dropped to the floor and hunched along the carpet with grotesque awkwardness.

She whispered: "Don't touch me or I'll tear your eyes out. No, we are not Englishwomen. We are Americans. Your Kaiser honored my father once—gave him a decoration. Your Kaiser will put you to death if you harm the daughter of Stephen Parcot. Don't you know the difference between England and America? We've never harmed you. We've given you welcome and riches, and we love your music. I can play beautiful German music on my violin. Music will make you merciful. If you are a true German you can't be the fiend you look. You'll



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be sorry. You'll kill yourself or go mad some day when you remember."

Noll implored her with his hands and protested: "I am an American! An American!"

She recoiled in fright, waving palms of repulsion at him and laughing maniacally.

Noll dropped to his knees to quiet her, pleading with her incoherently to believe him and trust him.

"Don't be afraid of me. Let me help you. I am your friend."

"Where is your revolver? Kill me with that, or give me your helmet and let me stab myself with the spike."

Noll prayed her to believe that she was in America and not in Belgium—in blessed, warless America, not in the hell of Belgium. But she fought him off, her face haggard with loathing in the witch's cowl of her hair about her fierce eyes, her lips uttering wild screams that made no sound.

He was in despair, but he could not leave her on the floor. He caught her hands to lift her, and she tried to cry out, but all that came from her white lips was a little shrill whisper:

"Mamma! Papa! Dimny! O God, don't let him!"

Then her eyelids drooped over her mad stare, and she fell asleep again.

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## CHAPTER VIII

THE sudden relaxation of her taut muscles and her collapse upon his shoulder nearly felled him. It was hard to lift her, and he made a gawky business of it before he could carry her to the bed and stretch her on it. He drew the coverlet over her and brushed her hair from her face and back from her snowy brow, and spread it on the pillow as he had found it when he first entered the room. Then he dropped into his chair, gulping for breath, sick with emotion and fatigue. He wanted to faint. He understood why she took refuge in the bliss of inanition.

He heard grouped voices on the walk outside. People were drifting by in clusters from church. His mother would be home soon. He heard the brisk step of the nurse on the front walk. He heard the door-bell ring and he hurried from the room.

He heard the nurse coming in. She noticed nothing, apparently, for he could hear her moving about, and she was crooning a hymn.

He bathed his face in cold water and slapped the back of his hot head with it. He was completely distraught. He had accomplished the miracle of waking the dead, but she had come back to earth in another incarnation. She was tortured by her perfervid imagination; her sister's experience had taken such possession of her that she had become her sister.

Noll remembered something he had read in Janet's book. He took it up and hunted through it as through a dictionary, looking for definitions of strange, unfathomable novelties. He found much talk of duplicate personalities, alternating personalities, souls leading various lives in succession, forgetting one in another.

But there was the stamp of insanity in all of them. Noll



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would not have this girl insane. If her experience had driven her out of herself and she had too literally put herself in her sister's place, she must be rescued back into her own beautiful identity before she established herself in the other.

But how was he to accomplish this? He had interfered in her destiny, and his guilt would be discovered. Once, when he was a boy left alone in the house, he had investigated the big clock, and it had suddenly come to pieces; the mainspring had leaped at him, whirring viciously like a rattlesnake. He had been unable to restore it and had been found among the ruins. He was appalled now to see what he had done to that girl's soul by his rash words.

He began to think back over what he had heard Dimny say. At last he had a name to call her by. He loved the name. It had a honey taste on his tongue. Out of the hubbub of her delirium certain other names began to emerge to his memory. He wrote them down lest they escape him again.

He knew something about her! that her father was Stephen Parcot. Noll vaguely remembered reading of the eminent explorer. He had gone to the North just before the war, leaving the world at ease. Evidently he had left one daughter in a convent in Belgium somewhere and closed the Arctic door behind him like the door of a peaceful study. He had another daughter named Dimny. That was the name of this girl. And Noll knew where she came from. Her father had left her in Los Angeles—with her mother, no doubt. When the war broke over Belgium the letter told how the mother had made haste to cross the ocean to bring home that daughter, and both of the luckless wretches had been caught in that first all-devastating tidal wave of the German sea.

It was plain now to Noll that the girl in the other room had received the letter from Belgium. He imagined what a fearful blow it must have dealt her.

But how had she come to Carthage? It was thousands of miles from her home, and no railroad led from here to there direct. By what magic had she been transported?

He could imagine her gathering her effects together,



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sobbing but resolute, providing herself with money and setting out on a quest to find her people and give them what help she could. That was what he would want her to do. He loved her for the impulse.

She must have sewed the letter into her money-belt so that no one should learn what had happened. Something had diverted her from her path to Belgium. Something had brought her down helpless, all but lifeless, without friend or name or baggage, in a strange village. But she should not lack a champion. His aimless life had suddenly received a direction, a mission. He heard a call. The days of knighthood were returned, together with all the cruelties that gave chivalry its being.

He took a high resolve that he would recover this girl's soul and restore her to her sister and her mother and help them keep from the morbid public their pitiful secret. It would be a thing worth doing, a beautiful, holy, compassionate task in hideous, savage, heartless times.

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## CHAPTER IX

THE next morning Noll wrote on the letterhead of the bank a formal request to its correspondent bank in Los Angeles for information concerning Miss Dimny Parcot and her family, and their commercial standing. This last was merely an excuse for the letter. He asked that the answer be addressed to him personally as the assistant cashier.

On the few occasions when he had access to Dimny he kept up that one-sided conversation. He poured into her ear the refrain: "You are Dimny Parcot! You are not your sister, but yourself! You are not in Belgium, but in your own country. You are Dimny Parcot!"

He was playing Pygmalion to a Galatea who was not quite marble nor yet quite flesh. She hovered between life and death, breathing statuary. Noll's heart failed him again and again. But when he was away from her she haunted him, and he used every device to get into her room and plead his cause, recommending himself by his incessantly repeated name: "I am Noll Winsor—Noll Winsor. I love you, Dimny; I want to be your friend. Don't die without letting me live for you, or let me die for you in your place. Dimny, Dimny Parcot, it is Noll Winsor talking to you."

His infatuation would have been evident to a far less eager student of his moods than his mother was. She kept silent for a long time and hoped that his idle interest would pass. It had been burden enough that the girl had been inflicted on the household. The quiet obscurity of the home had vanished into a neighborhood notoriety. The telephone was always bringing in queries. People called for no purpose but to ask impertinent questions. The girl was an expense of time and toil and money. If in addition



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she should carry off the only son of the house, what a wretched repayment that would be for the Christian charity squandered on her!

Mrs. Winsor saw in her a kind of Lorelei. She did not sit on a high cliff combing her hair with a golden comb and singing the young voyager to shipwreck, but she lay still and drew him with invisible nets. Mrs. Winsor resolved to get her out of the house as soon as she could, and in the meanwhile to get her out of Noll's heart before she fastened herself there with too many deep roots. She made a definite attack, at last, one evening.

"Noll, honey."

"Yes, Mother?"

"I've been thinking."

"Yes, Mother?"

"That girl up-stairs—the—the poor thing—she isn't getting the best of care here. She ought to be taken to—to the hospital in St. Louis."

"Why, Mother!"

"The newspapers and the police ought to be notified, and advertisements printed so as to find her people and let them take her away."

Noll did not dare to tell her that the girl's people could not be found.

"I think we'd better keep her a little while longer," he said.

His mother spoke out sharply.

"You act as if you were in love with her."

"Why, Mother! You're joking."

"I'm dreadfully worried about you—and her. There's no telling who she is or what brought her here."

"I only know that she's a girl in great distress."

Mrs. Winsor hesitated before she divulged her own secret.

"But how do we know what she—what sort of girl she is?"

"Mother!" Noll cried. "It isn't like you to be suspicious of a poor child that you know nothing at all about."

"I know something about her that I've never told you."

Noll's gaze went toward her with alarm. Perhaps the



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girl had had an awakening one day while he was at the bank. "Tell me," he said.

As she told him what she had seen from the porch the iron of jealousy was twisting in Noll's soul, leaving its rust there.

Mrs. Winsor went on: "Ward Pennywell found the girl —after the woman Ward was with had screamed. I never heard who she was, did you?"

Noll growled: "I suppose it was that Mrs. Lynne he's been running after. He's making a fool of himself over her."

Noll dismissed the intriguers with an impatient gesture. He was more interested in his mother's disclosure.

"You say you saw Dimny—this girl—walk into the shadow of the tree with a man?"

"With a man—yes. So now don't you agree with me that she'd better go to the hospital?"

"No."

"What are you going to do?"

"Find the man."

Noll suffered as only the young can suffer, the young who can still believe in perfection and hope for the first blossoms of love. He loved a girl and hardly knew her name. He hated a man and did not know so much as his name.

Noll tried to tell himself that there was some innocent explanation. He must be careful not to condemn anybody in advance. But his heart was sick within him.

His mother brooded over him with the heartache of a mother who sees her boy entangled in the first problems of mistaken infatuation. Abruptly she spoke.

"Noll, honey."

"Yes, Mother?"

"Didn't you call that girl by some name? What name did you call her by?"

Noll answered, absently: "Dimny. Her name is Dimny Parcot."

"But how did you find it out?"

He was startled to realize that his secret had jumped from him. He could not escape his mother's eyes. After a moment he reverted to a habit that boys get over all too



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soon. In his early years he had used to tell his mother nearly everything. Now that she demanded what he knew, he felt that she had a right to his confidence and he a need of her counsel. He threw himself upon her love as once upon her lap. He told her of the finding of the letter sewed up in the lining of the money-belt. He even took from his pocketbook the letter itself and handed it to her.

She was so shocked with pride at having her prodigal home once more in his trouble that she could not withhold proud laughter—the laughter of an ancient Sara finding herself a mother again.

She took the letter with the all-beautiful smile of old age breaking through the wall between itself and youth. She began to read; her smile was erased from her face like a mask snatched off, revealing tragedy beneath. When she understood, she was afraid to look at her son across this fearful truth. With her eyes lowered, she murmured:

"The poor child! The poor, poor child and her mother!"

She shuddered and did not speak for a long while, and then:

"But you called her Dimny. There is no such name here in the letter."

Then Noll told her of his séance and how he had used the word "Thuringians" as the *Open Sesame!* to the locked gates of that mind in siege, and of the untoward result.

A long silence followed, till at length he said:

"Mother, honey, my cousin, Nazi Duhr, belonged to one of those Thuringian regiments."

She cried out against this implication.

Noll explained: "I don't say he was with this regiment. I don't say that. But I do say—"

"He was such a nice boy!"

"Armies are made up of nice boys, Mother. It's war that makes them go out and kill people and outrage free countries."

"But he was such a nice boy!"

"The Germans don't deny that they are in Belgium, do they? They don't deny that they have burned cities and shot priests and old hostages and women in Belgium, do they?"



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That mysterious instinct that leads people to defend their races against other races led this old lady in the mid-West to rally to the standard of invaders she had never seen, doing deeds that revolted her.

"But think what the Russians did in East Prussia before the great Von Hindenburg drove them out."

"What the Germans accuse the Russians of is just the same thing as this," said Noll. "It proves to me that they've both been guilty."

Mrs. Winsor fought on.

"The Russians are barbarians. They began the war, and treacherous England joined them to finish her work against poor Germany."

"That's what I've been telling people," Noll sighed, "but I'm beginning to feel that the attack on little Belgium puts us Germans out of court. Anyway, we are not responsible for Russia's soul or England's. But we are, a little, for our own, aren't we? The worse the Russians were, the better the Germans ought to have been. Or else, how can the Germans say they fought to save Europe from the Slav peril? How could the Slavs have done worse than the Teutons? Nobody ever did worse, not even the Mexican bandits. And I always come back to this—that the French and Russians and Germans were at war, but the Belgians weren't. The English didn't declare war till after Belgium was attacked. There never can be any excuse for the attack on Belgium. That's all there is to it, Mother. It's simply one of those horrible mistakes that are worse than crime."

Mrs. Winsor did not intend to alienate her recovered lad by any dispute.

"Well, what can we do about it, honey?" she asked, meekly.

"I don't know. But I have a feeling that the people of German blood in America ought to do what they can to prevent the Germans at home from doing any more wicked things. Our Germans ought to do all they can to undo the evil the Germans abroad are doing, so that, in after-times, people can say of the Germans that came to America for freedom and enjoyed it, that they did their best, their



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*möglichste*, to teach freedom to the old folks at home. It's the fault of the Kaiser and the Czar that Europe is on fire. But we don't believe in kaisers and czars here. They're a joke to us—and a mighty poor one."

Mrs. Winsor was reminded of the tradition that family traits skip a generation. She had once heard "*Die Freiheit!*" shouted with the ringing cry of passion. She had known of Prussia as the oppressor of the other German states. And now the democratic fervor of her young son, for whom Mrs. Winsor felt infinitely more devotion than for all the nations in the world, kindled the mother's heart with some of his fire. The important thing to her was that her boy was exhibiting his blazing heart to her. He was no longer the shy stranger who had for years treated her as a sort of beloved landlady, with no part in his real life.

She could not escape the fact that the girl up-stairs whom she had accused of decoying her son from her had wrought the miracle of his return. Her mother-heart melted with pity for the worse-than-orphaned girl. Her mother-soul understood what that other mother must feel. How could she reject Noll's arguments, quench that flaming chivalry of his, or fail to quicken with it? She was the little mother now of a big man, and she was proud of her submissiveness to his mood.

"What do you want me to do, honey?" she asked. "Tell me, and I'll do all I can."

"I want you to help me get that girl well, and get her people back to her—as—as far as we can. I want you for your own sake to show that a German heart can be merciful. I want you to redeem as far as you can the cruel harm that German wickedness has done. Don't you see what I mean? I fought a man awhile ago for calling the Germans Huns, and now I feel that I ought to apologize to him—and I will. All good Germans ought to apologize for the fiends. Great Lord! we ought to apologize to the Huns for giving them a bad name."

"I'll do what I can," she repeated, indicating by a little spreading of the hands her feebleness and her age. "But what can I do?"



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"Help me to get poor Dimny well. That's the first job. I've been sneaking into that room unbeknownst to you—"

"Not always, honey. I've worried myself to death every time I heard her door open and close. I was afraid to speak, but I've worried!"

"Well, you needn't have. You see why now. I couldn't tell the doctor or the nurse about this letter, don't you see? I was afraid to tell you, too, till you shook it out of me."

"Oh, honey, if you would only know that there is nothing on earth you could tell your mother that would hurt her half as much as your not telling her. You don't know how it has broken my heart to realize that you thought of me as a stranger. It is many, many years since you and I have been like this. I'm so glad, so glad!"

She proved it by a gorgeous crying-spell, on the shoulder of her kneeling son, who wrapped his arms about her and kissed her white hair.

Noll rose at last and drew a chair close and told her all he knew and of his plan not to let Dimny know what he had known. If eventually she told him, he would confess, but only then.

"Suppose she wakes up and asks for her money-belt," his mother whispered. "She'll see that the letter has been read."

"I've been meaning to put it back," he explained. "I've kept the thread, but I'm such a blacksmith with the needle."

"Let me do that much," Mrs. Winsor pleaded. "I can put the thread back in the very needle-holes so that she'll never know."

Noll patted her on the shoulder and hurried to fetch her the belt and her work-basket. They were mumbling and whispering in devoted conspiracy throughout the task.

The new *entente cordiale* with his mother enabled Noll to be with Dimny nearly every evening. His mother worked with him now, and it was she who urged Miss Stowell to take frequent absences.

But Noll was haunted by that other man. He was afraid that he would lose him. He wondered how to trace him. He had not the slightest clue to begin with.



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Eventually this letter came from the bank in Los Angeles:

Replying to your favor of 18th inst., would say we have been delayed by the fact that party referred to was not a customer of this bank and had to be located at another. Information secured as follows:

Miss Dimny Parcot is not a resident of this city, but came here with her mother and began vocal studies with Prof. Marco Torelli and piano with Prof. Otto Keetel.

She is a daughter of Stephen Parcot, the scientist who sailed for the Arctic regions last summer on a two or three years' voyage. Mrs. Parcot left here early in August for the East. Miss Dimny Parcot continued her studies till recently, when she announced to Professors Torelli and Keetel that she had been written for. She paid her bills and closed her account at the bank, drawing out a balance of about five thousand dollars.

This is all the information at hand. If more is required, we should be glad to serve you.

And now Noll felt that he had a little firm ground beneath him for foothold. Dimny had been verified and given a habitation.

He persisted in his efforts to telephone to that long-distant soul, testing every wire, calling her "Dimny! Dimny!" in the hope that she would grow used to him and take him into her dreams as The Duchess of Towers took Peter Ibbetson in that most wonderful romance.

And finally his incessant whispers seemed to wear away the distance. For one day when he entered the room alone and began his old tune of "Dimny! Dimny, Dimny!" he paused, then exclaimed, "Miss Dimny Parcot—what a pretty name!"

"I'm glad you like it."

He could not believe what he had heard. Her eyes were closed and she spoke drowsily, as one who talks in sleep. To his astounded delight she went on, murmuring briskly:

"It's a famous name, anyway. I'm proud of it for my father's sake. You've heard of him, of course."

"Of course," said Noll, trying to be calm. "I'm a great admirer of his. I've always loved the great explorers, especially Stephen Parcot."

"Oh, I'm so glad, because I've a favor to ask of you—a great favor."



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"Please!"

He thought she was talking to him, but he found that she had another, an invisible auditor.

"The station-master tells me that you are going to Carthage."

"Yes," said Noll, wondering who the station-master was and what station he mastered. She talked on, but her mind suffered great lapses of memory. There was no continuity in her mutterings.

"Day after to-morrow I must catch the boat for Europe. That's why I want to get to Carthage this evening."

She laughed politely, as if he had spoken.

"Yes, I know there's a war over there; that's why I—well, I've simply got to make the boat. You can help me infinitely."

She was as light and cheerful as the mad Ophelia, except that there was a slight affectation, an excess of sprightliness such as one who is embarrassed assumes before a stranger. But she must be mad indeed to speak of coming to Carthage to take ship to Europe, to Carthage, almost equally remote inland from either ocean!

"The station-master tells me," he heard her say, "that you live in Carthage and just happened to be here in—in Macuta; funny names new towns have, haven't they?"

Macuta was a small village a few miles away on the Santa Fé railroad, which did not touch Carthage. But Dimny was babbling on:

"Oh, you have? You will? You are an angel straight from heaven!" She broke down, weeping and laughing at once. "I'm sorry to be so weak and foolish, but if you knew how terribly I want to catch that boat! My trunk is all right. I got it on the train ahead, thank Heaven. Of course you understand that I will pay you— Oh, but I couldn't think of it unless you let me pay you. . . . You embarrass me. Well, if I must, I must. I'll be grateful to you as long as I live. I don't care how fast you go."

Now, apparently, she dreamed herself aboard a little motor-car. Noll harkened for the name of the man, but she seemed to be uncertain of it. Suddenly, after much whispering, she spoke aloud:



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"Great Heavens, my suit-case and my hand-bag! I left them on the sleeping-car! No, no, don't stop. Don't go back. . . . I can always buy more clothes; I wouldn't risk going back for worlds. The hand-bag had a little money in it—not much, though. I have more with me."

She tightened her lips and blenched as if he had offended her by a familiarity. "No, it's in a money-belt."

She did not speak for some time; then the man evidently apologized, for she said: "Don't speak of it, please. I—I'm sure I'm too much indebted to you to mind a joke. . . . A girl traveling alone ought not to be too sensitive. You see I've never been alone so long before."

The car evidently stopped, for she spoke with anxiety.

"Yes, I suppose you really ought to light the lights. It begins to look like a storm, doesn't it? So peaceful off to the west, and the sky so red in the east, as if the sunset got turned round. It's like America and Europe, isn't it?

"No, thanks, I'm not cold. That's excitement that makes me shiver. Oh, please! Oh, I beg you! You can't mean to be unkind when you've been so kind. You wouldn't take advantage of my helplessness!"

There seemed to be a silent amorous struggle. Noll blazed with jealous rage. It was uncanny. He hated a ghost who was not there, but tormented her in memory, a persistent flirt who had annoyed her before Noll ever saw her. Noll loathed the dog. She was moaning now:

"Oh, no, I'm not a pretty girl. I'm a heartbroken woman. I don't want anything like that. No, never. Don't stop to apologize. . . . Please drive as fast as you can.

"Yes, of course, a woman's 'No!'—but not always. A woman can't always mean yes. . . . Oh, it's nothing against you, but my heart is dead. I don't want love. I hate love, that kind of love. . . .

"Please watch where you are driving. You nearly wrecked us that time. And if you knew—

"Now we seem to be coming into the town. It's Carthage, I hope. . . . What's that—a revolver? Oh, a tire! Oh no! It couldn't be. Oh, hurry, please! It's late. We'll never make it. . . . At last! At last! Faster!



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Would you mind? My watch says we have only a few minutes. . . . Is it much farther?"

She gave a little cry and seemed to be flung and stunned.

"Don't mind me. I'm not hurt. But the car? The wheel isn't broken off. It can't be. Isn't there another car? Not a thing in sight. Then I'll run. Don't hold me. How far is it? Which road do I take? You can't leave your car. You're terribly kind. . . . No, thank you, I can get along faster, I think, if I don't take your arm."

She fell into complete silence. Noll had lost her again. He tried to recall her before she fled too far.

"Miss Parcot, Miss Parcot," he cried, "you'll miss your train."

It was a long time later before she spoke again; then a gush of tears first drenched her cheeks. She groaned:

"To think that I should have missed it! The other train will get there first, and I'll not be on it. Oh, you never know when you are making haste, do you? That train at three in the morning—will it really make the connection? Oh, what are hours? What's a little sleep? I can always sleep. What does my convenience matter in a world like this?

"It's very good of you to offer me your home. It would be nice to sit there till the train goes. I won't disturb your mother. She must go to bed. I'll sit up. Is it far?

"Oh, I'd better walk. They say it's best for a strained ankle. We can make it before the storm breaks. It's going to be a big storm. How hushed everything is! The town's asleep already. Such a pretty town, it seems to be."

She spoke so softly that Noll kept close to her to hear.

"No, thanks, I don't need your arm. I'll rest here just a moment, if you don't mind, and lean against this tree. Wonderful old tree, isn't it?" She began anew to put away imaginary hands, to move her head aside as from pursuing lips. Noll's heart plunged as she struggled with a shadowy wrestler.



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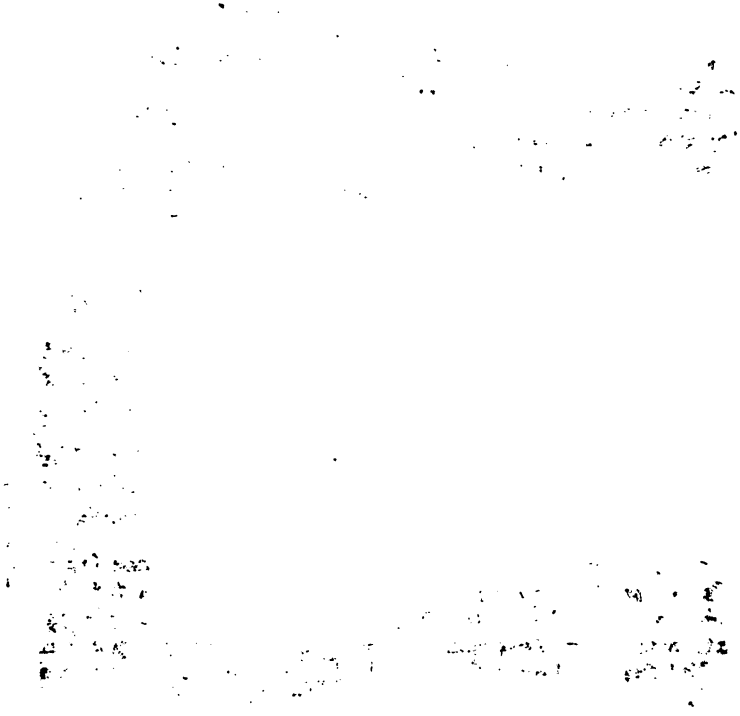
"Oh no. Please—you promised! Don't, don't kiss me! Don't! You're too strong. You frighten me. In the lightning then your face looked like a—a Thuringian's! Mamma! Sister! The Thuringians! Ah, I'm dying! I'm dead! I'm glad! Ah!"

She was drowned again in oblivion, and nothing that Noll could do or say or cry could recall her.



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## CHAPTER X

NOLL was bewildered both more and less by this latest utterance of that increasingly restless brain. He had read in one of the books that a true awakening from such an attack would be shown by a recurrence to the last experience before the curtains of oblivion fell about the soul. He found in Janet's book the account of a girl who had crises of sleep from terror caused by a narrow escape from a bull; of a man who, being wrongfully accused, became unconscious whenever he met his accuser.

Noll had no intention of confronting Dimny with the tormentor she had described, but he had an intense desire to confront the man with himself. He had small material to work on. Fortunately he had a small town to work in.

After fastening his suspicions on various men who proved innocent of this affair, if not of others, it occurred to him to visit the garages and inquire what car had been wrecked on the Macuta-Carthage road on the date of Dimny's arrival.

At last, at "John and Joe's Practical Garage," he found not only the name of the man, but the car itself. It had been brought in by the owner's orders and was still awaiting his return.

John and Joe explained how Lou Neebe had telephoned in that he'd smashed his "tin Lizzie" out on the Macuty road a piece and would they go git it and glue it together, and they done so, but he hadn't showed up yit.

They spoke of it with the derision a garager has for a cheap car, but Noll's lip was curling with scorn for the cheaper man who owned it and who had been flattered by fate with the misunderstood privilege of such a companion.

But first Noll must find him, and it was several days more before Neebe returned to town from his travels. Then



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one evening on his way home Noll saw the fellow rounding a corner in the swaggering way that Carthage calls "flip." He was bigger than Noll in height, but his courage was only bluff-deep. When Noll said, "Neebe, I've been looking for you," he tried to brush by with a brusque: "See you s'mother time. Got no time to-day."

Noll took him by the gaudy necktie and held him at arm's-length.

"Oh yes, you have," said Noll. "Now tell me all about it."

"About what?"

"You know well enough. And so do I. But I want to give you a chance to speak before I beat the daylight out of you."

Neebe sputtered a moment; then he began to plead.

"About that girl, you mean?"

Noll did not waste a nod, but his look was confirmation enough. Neebe did not wait for definite indictment.

"Why, I never meant any harm to the little lady. I wouldn't harm a flea. You oughta know me well enough not to suspicion I would. But I'll tell you how it was, Noll. You see it was like this, Noll. I'm up at Fort Madison sellin' a little bill of goods, and comin' 'long home in my car, I remember a frien' o' mine in Macuta and I roll round to say howdy, and I see a big freight-train spilled all over the Santy Fee tracks. Well, whilst I'm looking it over, the Chicago express comes along and nearly smashes into the box-cars. The passengers climb out cussin' the delay and the place they've got to spend it at.

"Well, it looks like a long job clearin' the track, and I guess I'll be moseyin' along when up comes one of the passengers, nice young lady, and says the station-agent says she can maybe make Chicago in the morning by cuttin' over to Carthage and pickin' up the Q., and would I take her. I says of course I would. Well, she offers me money, but I says I never take money off a lady, and she's entirely welcome. She's in an awful rush and I don't hit nothin' but the high spots. What's a little gasolene to oblige a lady? Why, I just run that car of mine to death to please



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her and never charged her a cent. I lose one shoe, and finally—*splung!* into a telegraph pole, and *bim!* goes the wheel. We missed the Q. on account of bustin' the wheel, and she's in an awful stew about it.

"Well, I don't want to see the little lady sittin' down in the deepo till three A.M., so I says, 'Come on up to the house, and ma will be glad to see you.'"

"Was your ma at home?" said Noll.

Neebe turned white and nearly dropped. "Well, I naturally supposed she was. It turned out she was in Buena Vista, but I'd forgot that."

Noll was sick with rage. But he controlled himself. "Go on—get it out."

"Well, goin' up the street the little lady—I never got her name—well, anyways, she's so nice and grateful and so sad and all, that I got a little too friendly, I guess. She stops by that tree by your house and wants to rest a minute, and I offered her my arm and—and—" He caught Noll's steely eye. "Well, you see, Noll, she was so pretty, and I'm a very susceptible feller, and—well, at that I on'y tried to put my arm around her.

"O' course she said 'Stop!' but they all do, and—well, you know what women are like. So I supposed she just wanted a little coaxin', and I guess I did use a little force. She didn't scream or anything—just mumbled something I couldn't understand. I'm kind of strong, you know, and well, I was just goin' to—I was goin' to give her one little kiss, you know, when—my Gawd, she just died on me. She just crumpled up and slid to the ground. I thought she must have been attackted with heart disease and went out like folks do sometimes. I'd ought to have got a doctor, but somethin' put such a scare in me, I lit out for home. Gawd! what a night I spent!

"Next mornin' I inquired around and heard folks sayin' a strange girl had been picked up outside the Winsors', and nobody knew if she was goin' to die or not. So I knew she was in good hands. But I was afraid she'd tell on me, and, besides, I had business out of town and I—I couldn't wait. I wrote to a certain party in town, and they said she was still sick, so I took a chance and come on home. And



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that's all, so help me! I don't know what to say or do. What you want me to say or do?"

"You can keep this thing to yourself till your dying day. If you do, I won't harm you. If you breathe a word of it to a human being I'll make you wish your father and mother had died before they met. Understand? Promise?"

"Promise? Great Lord! I ain't likely to tell on myself, am I? I swear to Gawd nobody will ever hear a squeak from me."

"All right, then! Go on about your business, if you have any. And if your tongue gets to itching, cut it out and save yourself trouble."

"Count on me, Noll. Don't worry about me, Noll. Much obliged, Noll." He hurried off.

When Noll reached home he found Doctor Mitford in a mood of great excitement. His patient had come out of her sleep and had enacted exactly the same scene that she had played for Noll.

Mrs. Winsor had been present, and she signaled Noll that she had not betrayed her knowledge of its repetition. And Noll played the part of surprise, too, as best he could.

Doctor Mitford had to think this over, and he went about his business, promising to return that night before eight with a new program.

As soon as he had gone, and as soon as the nurse had been invited to take her usual two hours of air, Noll went with his mother to Dimny's room. She was sleeping truly now, in a gracefully lithe attitude, with color alive in her cheeks and in her arms, and with the breath lifting her bosom gently, peacefully, lovably.

And now Noll tried another experiment from the books. He began to say to her:

"You are well now, Dimny. Your nightmare is over. This is Noll Winsor talking. When the clock strikes, count the strokes. And when it strikes eight times, open your eyes and take up your life again. Understand?"

He said this over and over and over. He held her warm hand while he said it, and though he felt no answering pressure, every time he said "Understand?" there was a



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little tremor in the great petals of her eyelids, as if they were impatient to obey.

At a little before eight the doctor came. The nurse was there in uniform. Noll and his mother waited outside the door. They did not know what stimulus the doctor had planned to use. He wanted to perform his miracle himself.

The town clock began to boom in long, leaping throbs of sound. Eight times the billows of tone went across the air, and then Noll and his mother heard the doctor gasp. They heard the nurse drop something as the doctor cried out, "Quick! put pillows back of her!"

Noll could not wait. He opened the door and said, "Did you call me?"

The doctor answered by pointing toward the bed.

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## CHAPTER XI

DIMNY PARCOT sat upright, oblivious of her audience and putting her hair back with gentle sweeping gestures. She was perfecting a noble yawn. Noll had never before admired the act or thought it beautiful. Always before it had meant a losing battle with sleep. Now it was the last struggle of sleep. It was the twilight before the daybreak.

Dimny had come back to life. And nothing proved it more vividly than the fact that, as her eyes made out that she was not alone, one of her hands dropped quickly before her lips to hide her magnificent yawn, and she gasped:

"I beg your pardon!"

She was awake enough now to realize that there were strangers who stared at her. And her muscles, taking up again their instinctive duties, gathered the coverlet about her, and she began to be afraid again.

Mrs. Winsor pushed the doctor and Miss Stowell aside, clasped her close, and spoke to her motherly:

"My dear, you are with friends. You have been ill, but we love you and you are well again."

Dimny acknowledged the affection by returning the embrace; then she disengaged herself a little to say:

"Thank you. You're very good. But who—who—please—who are you? And where are we?"

"I am Mrs. Winsor, and this is my son Noll Winsor, and this is Doctor Mitford and Miss Stowell."

"Noll Winsor!" Dimny cried. "Oh, I know that name."

Noll blushed with joy to think that his courtship had not been altogether vain. But when he stepped forward her



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eyes did not know him and she shrank into his mother's arms, whispering:

"I beg your pardon. I'm mistaken. I've never seen you before, I think."

Noll said nothing, but fell back, disheartened. Doctor Mitford took charge of the case and told his patient in his bedsidiest manner that she had been through a fever, and that she was all well but the getting strong enough to go about her business.

"About my business—oh yes!" said Dimny. And then a wave of terror broke over her. She seemed to be retreating into her past, when the doctor sharply commanded her to stop her nonsense and get well.

Dimny responded to the lash and collected herself. She asked:

"Does anybody know who I am?"

Doctor Mitford rescued the Winsors from their consciences by saying:

"We haven't the faintest idea, except that you fell into the hands of these good people here. Don't tell us anything till you're good and ready. The main thing is, the sooner you wake up and the more you eat and do as you're told, the sooner you'll be able to go wherever you were going."

Dimny pondered a long while, eying the spectators furtively before she made another query:

"Did I have anything with me—any money, or anything?"

Noll spoke: "Yes, my mother found this."

Dimny started at his voice and stared at him keenly, but when he brought forward the money-belt she took it eagerly from his hand. She merely glanced at the money, but she studied the stitching closely. Her fingers surreptitiously kneaded the space where the letter was hidden. She breathed deeply with relief.

The doctor, understanding nothing of this, felt called upon to intervene.

"I don't want to bother you, but have you a mother or anybody that might be worrying about you?"

Noll and Mrs. Winsor put out their hands to check him,



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but the word had passed, and Dimny broke. Tears gushed to her eyelids; sobs pounded at her heart, and she cried: "My mother! Oh, my mother! My poor mother!"

Mrs. Winsor gathered her up again and held her while her grief flung and tore her. Mrs. Winsor ordered the doctor and Noll and the nurse out of the room with her eyes, and whispered what comfort she could.

"Don't tell me anything you don't want to, my sweet child. But let me be your mother till you find your own."

"I wish I could tell you," Dimny wailed. "I can't, though; I can't. But you are good, good, and I'll try not to be any more trouble to you. I've been enough. Have I been here long?"

When she learned how much time had been squandered in idleness, she found strength somewhere to suffer another onslaught of pain and self-reproach.

Again Mrs. Winsor dragged her up from despair and promised her help and compelled her to lift her fardels again.

Days followed of alternate surrender to gloom and reconquest of hope. Always Dimny's mission had to be held before her. She must eat because she needed the strength. She must read or talk because her mind must not poison itself with brooding. She must go out riding in the car because the air was medicine.

She was as obedient as she could be in everything, but she would not talk of herself when the doctor asked her to. Noll and Mrs. Winsor never troubled her. They knew already too much for their peace of mind.

She would not meet the townspeople, and the Winsors did not urge her to. They kept a guard about her, and the tormented neighbors had their own theories for their own information.

Noll was desperately in love with her, but she would none of love, except a sad and sisterly tenderness and the gratitude of a beggar. He suffered from her gratitude, but dared not ask for any other boon. His heart hungered for endearments, but he felt that his first hint of a caress might cast her back into the pit of oblivion where Lou



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Neebe left her. He dared not play any part but that of brother, court jester, nurse, and servant.

And she gave him ample reward of thanks in all of those offices, but never dreamed of him otherwise. She was intent upon thoughts that he understood and dared not ask to share. She was getting well frantically, too frantically for her own success. When the doctor told her that it would take weeks to build her strength anew, she scouted him. When he warned her that any rash act might throw her back to where she had been, she yielded with reluctance.

She asked the news of the war with a feverish interest. It was December by then, and the manhood of Europe had taken up a hellish residence in the endless leagues of freezing ditches. The deadlock had gripped the armies of the world, and the sorry Christmas of 1914 was the next important event in the calendar of America.

The second evening after she was strong enough to take dinner with the family, Dimny sighed:

"Last Christmas I was at home with my father and my mother and my sister, and we were complaining of the flowers and the fruits of California. We wanted cold and snow. We were complaining of roses! And this Christmas where shall we be? This Christmas!"

She did not weep. She was worn out with tears. But she ran from the room. Noll and his mother did not pursue her. They finished their meal in miserable silence.

Noll waited a long time now before he said:

"Mother, hadn't you better go comfort the poor thing?"

He helped her up the stairs and stood back while his mother tapped on the door. The very sound seemed to imply an empty room. Getting no answer, Mrs. Winsor went in. An envelope set up against a pincushion caught her eye.

While she fumbled for her glasses she called to Noll. He ran in, took the envelope from his mother's hand and read:

DEAR KIND PEOPLE,—Forgive me, but I have gone on my way. I have troubled you enough. This five hundred dollars is for the doctor, the nurse, and a few of my expenses. I can never repay your



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goodness except with undying gratitude and my ceaseless prayers. If you do not hear from me again, it is because I have failed in my mission. My love for you both will never fail. God bless and keep you.

Your devoted

DIMNY.

Noll ran for his car and sent it flying to the railroad station. The Eastern express was just moving out, a sliding array of lighted windows and dark. In the smoke, sparks were alive like shooting stars. One of the baggage-men told the breathless youth that he had seen a strange young lady clamber aboard the sleeping-car.

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## CHAPTER XII

THE resolution to set out on her pilgrimage had not come to Dimny suddenly. She reproached herself for the selfishness and laziness she had shown in being ill so long.

She was convinced that the Winsors were ignorant of her errand in Europe, the corrosive poisonous secret she had sewn into her money-belt. She was grateful for their goodness to her, yet modest enough to feel that her best proof of gratitude would be the removal of herself from their long-burdened charity. She feared to announce her departure lest they try to persuade her to tarry yet a while.

She made ready a little bundle of things she had bought since she came to Carthage. She left it on the hall-tree when she went down to dinner. The grief that swept over her, remembering the happy Christmas of a year ago, made an unintentionally pat excuse for leaving the dining-room.

Instead of climbing the stairs she gathered up her bundle and went stealthily out into the street. It was her first walk alone since her illness.

She shivered and sped down the darker ways to the railroad station. She could tell by the slump of the pessimistic hack-horses, with blankets over their backs, and the cluster of motor-cars with blankets over their radiators, that the train had not yet come and gone. She would not go into the light and warmth within-doors lest some one speak to her. She haunted the shadows outside till the locomotive appeared, a black dragon breathing fire and spitting sparks, but amiable to her purposes.

She hurried to the sleeping-car and found that one lower berth was left. She had provided herself with money for



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the journey from her money-belt, and she paid her fare to the conductor in cash.

It was blessed to feel the train move and take her with it. It was wonderful to be rid of that clamping paralysis that had held her in motionless torment so long. Motion was life; it was progress, success.

After a while the porter began to make up the berths. Dimny found that a strange and ominous man was to occupy the pigeonhole above her.

Her nerves, sharpened by their ordeal, trembled at the amenities of sleeping-car life, which would be incredible if they were not commonplace. She must sleep in a double-decked bed behind the very same curtains with a total stranger, her only guard a swaying cloth door that buttoned down the front and had no lock at the top. But custom hallows all things, and she would have been accounted ridiculous rather than modest if she had protested.

She slept a little, but fitfully, raising the window-shade now and then to stare out at the bleak plains sliding past, the vast spaces of farmland in a double trance of night and winter.

Relenting fate permitted her to find her trunk in Chicago and reclaim it by the payment of the storage charges. In the lost-and-found room she unearthed her suit-case and her hand-bag; they were just as she had left them on the Santa Fé sleeper—to her powder-puff, her trunk-keys, her small money, and the various other things that make up the chaos of a woman's wrist pocket.

She pondered bitterly how much time she had lost by her impatience at Macuta. If she had not attempted the short cut by way of Carthage she would not have met the adventure that threw her into the long, bad dream. She would have saved weeks of delay. She would have been in Belgium by now—unless some other accident had prevented.

Who knows when he is really making progress? How many years the Kaiser lost and how many enemies he gained by cutting across Belgium! If he had been in less wasteful haste he would have escaped, for one thing, the befouling of his escutcheon with the blood and anguish of Flanders and the unifying of a world against him. But



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then, if Germany had not been in such a hurry Belgium would have been left untroubled and then Dimny would have had no occasion to attempt her journey at all. Thus every *if* involves a chain of others.

When she had boarded the east-bound train her enforced repose enabled her grief to catch up with her again. Regret in a tempest swept across her soul, and the periods of forgetfulness had been merely a brief sleep that refreshed her power to suffer. She was ashamed of her respite, as one who remembers his beloved dead now and then is shaken with gusts of protest and remorse for the times of surcease from mourning.

"Why, Dimny Parcot! Hello there!"

She looked up to see Katherine Devoe, a girl she had met in Los Angeles, a riant, boisterous traveler just from Japan *via* Honolulu, a ukelele-thrummer, a living repertory of all the latest, flashiest songs and dances and amusements.

Dimny shrank from her. She was an utter anachronism in Dimny's gloom. Worse yet, she had with her a young man.

She introduced him to Dimny as Mr. Lane Sperling. When Dimny acknowledged the presentation with only a curt nod, Miss Devoe laughed.

"Why the feverish enthusiasm? Sperly's not half as fierce as he looks."

It was impossible to comment on such a statement. Miss Devoe clattered on:

"And we're perfectly proper. I have an ancient aunt in the drawing-room. She's train-sick—ideal chaperon."

She read Dimny's face accurately and aloud. "Don't look so frightened. We're not going to sit down. But I'll tell you what I will do. You're alone, aren't you? Had your lunch?"

"No," said Dimny, wishing at once that she had said she had.

"Come along with us to the dining-car and Sperly will blow you to foods."

Dimny shook her head, but Miss Devoe would not be denied, and Dimny went with her to get rid of her.



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It was well for Dimny that she should have a little coercion and that society should be inflicted on her, for she would not have sought it of herself. As soon as they had swayed and jostled through aisle after aisle to the dining-car, and had given their orders, Miss Devoe began on Dimny. Of course she would select the most hideously inappropriate remark. It is a gift.

"How's your darling of a mother?"

Dimny was thunderstruck. She faltered: "She's all right, thanks. How's yours?"

"Fairly fit. Your mother was just leaving for Europe, you remember, the day I met her. She's such a dear! So beautiful! and so young-looking!" She turned to her companion and praised Dimny's mother till she had the tears dancing on Dimny's cheeks. Then she flung the next most shocking question like a hand-grenade.

"Where you bound for?"

Dimny could hardly venture to confess "Belgium." She confessed half of the truth—"New York."

Miss Devoe still pursued her. "Your mother there? No? Where you stopping? Why don't you let me put you up?"

"I don't know yet. Some hotel. Thank you, I—I'm going right on across."

"Not to England?"

"Yes."

"But really, how sporty! Going as a nurse or something?"

"No— Yes— That is—"

"You mean it's none of my business. I get you. Still, forgive me for butting in, but don't you think it's an awfully bad month to be crossing the ocean—December? The weather is sure to be rotten."

A little later people would be forgetting that the ocean had ever been considered dangerous just of itself. Yet a few months, and that Germany which had brought to earth more towers than a thousand years of earthquakes would be choking the seas with more broken ships than a thousand years of tempest.

Yet a few months and the other nations would think of



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Germany as the only peril to be met on sea or land, in the flesh or in the spirit.

So now, in unconscious irony, Miss Devoe said, "Why not wait a few months till the war is over, and the winter, too?"

Sperling interposed, "Lord Kitchener says the war will last three years."

"Oh, Kitchie is just talking scare-talk to make the English people volunteer faster," was Miss Devoe's explanation. "There aren't people enough or dollars enough to keep the war going more than a few months. Germany will have to give in."

"This war's been a great lesson to me," said Sperling. "My dad has always talked thrift to me, and my mother talked religion, and the preacher preached peace. But what did you see over there in Belgium? The thriftiest people in the world, the most careful, saving, industrious people you ever heard of. They were pious, too, and they believed in peace so much that all the nations guaranteed their neutrality.

"And then the Kaiser comes whooping to the door. 'Let me through,' says he. 'We don't dast,' says they. 'Bang-oh!' says the Kaiser. Down goes the door. In come the Huns. It's a picnic for the Germans. They're so anxious to loot something that they began to loot before they got into Belgium. Some little towns in Germany, near the border, looked Belgian, so they looted them. Good joke on the towns, eh? The soldiers got drunk. Their own generals admit it. They were the sousedest army that ever marched. People say you could trace 'em by the broken bottles. They got to shooting wild. They accused the Belgians of starting riots. Says the elephant to the ant, 'Who are you shoving?' You know how reliable barroom justice was in the wild West. Well, the Germans shot first and held the trial afterward. They had a scoundrel write a book accusing the Belgians of all the activities and denying that the Germans committed any. The author was a drunkard, a drug-fiend, a yellow hound. A German judge sentenced him later and said worse things about him than anybody else could.

"Not that I'd have blamed the Belgians for shooting.



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I suppose a few of them did. I'd be ashamed of them if they didn't. But what were the Germans doing there? Who wouldn't shoot a burglar?

"And the most hopeless part of it is that they're not ashamed of it. They don't say, 'We lost our temper.' They say, 'We were foully attacked.' They call the Belgians beasts. I read in one of their pamphlets about *Die Belgien Bestien*. Can you beat it?

"Did you read what their own war-books say? It's so crooked it's beautiful. It says something like this: 'In an occupied country the people must be kept quiet by terrorizing 'em. It's unfortunate, but the best way to terrorize people is to make the innocent suffer with the guilty. In fact, if you can't find the guilty, the innocent must suffer in their place.'

"Don't you just love 'em? Those are the pious talkers for you! Christ said it was better for ninety guilty to escape than for one innocent to suffer. Am I right? Well, the Germans just put the reverse English on it as usual. Be sure the innocent suffer; get the guilty if you can. I look at the calendar and say nineteen fourteen is a typographical error for fourteen nineteen."

Miss Devoe put in a word: "You can't believe half you hear. The stories have been ridiculously exaggerated."

"Of course they have," said Sperling. "They're bound to be. But something must have happened to start all that talk. Besides, if you tell me that I shot sixty priests and—and abused fifty women, and I answer you back, 'That's a lie; I only shot fifteen priests and three women,' that doesn't exactly make me a little woolly white lamb, does it? It doesn't prove that you owe me an apology for slandering me, does it? Or does it? I ask you. Just how much apology do you owe a pirate if you overstate the number of peaceful citizens he pushed off the plank?"

The talk was getting too serious for Miss Devoe's impatient mind. She wanted to flit to pleasanter topics, so she said:

"Well, it's no skin off you, is it, Sperly? You don't have to get so red in the face. It doesn't go with your mauve tie."



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Sperling was incandescent. "I'm not going to converse; I'm going to act. Don't tell my mother, for the Lord's sake, but I'm on my way to England. I'm going to join up with the British and go after those hounds."

Miss Devoe was thrilled with the picturesqueness of this. "Lord! you don't mean it! How interesting! How unlike you! Do you know, I'm half tempted to go over, too, and run an ambulance or something. I'd be a nurse, but it's awfully messy. Take me along, Sperly, and I'll be your maid or valet or something. I can run a car. I can nearly run an airship. I can shoot, ride. Take me along, Sperly. There's a dear. It would be a glorious lark."

"Shut up, Kit. You make me sick with your everlasting larks. I've got an idea of what it really means, and I'm ashamed to belong to the human race."

Miss Devoe laughed at him, but Dimny was choked. Her heart went out to the flippant youth on whom sublimity sat so ill—and yet sat not so ill. His foppery gave perhaps the final note of majesty. Shakespeare had to put a fool alongside King Lear as the superlative touch. The modern knight errant dangles a cigarette from his lip and instead of blank verse flings slang. Yet he fights as hard, endures as well, and dies as holily as ever man has fought or endured or died.

The next morning found New York punctually in place when the train stopped. The thronged station, the jostle and clamor, the realization of the riddles ahead of her, led Dimny to repent declining to visit Katherine Devoe.

She grew afraid of the big hotels and the staring men with their glances reaching out like antennæ.

When Katherine said, "Sure you won't come along with me?" Dimny answered, "If you really want me, I believe I will."

"Bully for you. Of course I want you."

"Give me time to send a telegram?"

"To your young man, giving a corrected address?" railed Miss Devoe.

"I have no young man," said Dimny.

"Permit me to apply for the job," said Sperling. "Kate



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is going to be my maid. Let me be your valet. Can't I get your passport and your ticket to Europe while I'm getting mine?"

Dimny was very grateful. Sperling said:

"Consider it done. Do you mind my riding on your steamer across your ocean?"

Dimny startled him by the earnestness of her response.

'It would be an honor to go with a soldier. I'm proud to meet an American who realizes that this is America's business as well as Europe's."

Sperling felt himself grow a cubit taller as she praised him. He stared after her when she went to the telegraph-desk, and said: "Me for her strong. She's got something on her mind, though. I wonder what it is."

"Another man, probably," was Katherine's taunt. The barb struck in deep and stuck. Sperling winced visibly. She roared at that.

Dimny began her telegram by writing Lane Sperling. She crossed that out hastily and wrote "Oliver Winsor." She crossed that out and wrote "Mrs. Edward Winsor." To her she wrote with spontaneous gratitude, but she did not add her address. She did not know it. It did not occur to her that it would interest the Winsors!

Arrived safe and sound. Please don't worry about me. Dearest love and gratitude to you both. Sailing on first Cunarder.

DIMNY PARCOT.

She did not dream how Noll's gloom was pierced with joy at this word from her. And her word was "dearest love." He closed his eyes upon it and breathed deep of its savor. Then he read again and saw it coupled with "gratitude" and with "both." She loved him as she loved his mother!

Noll fought himself out in solitude. He rebuked himself for feeling hurt. Dimny had given him no pledge of love. He had given her no hint of it beyond what he had murmured to her during her long sleep, and she had forgotten that as one forgets the dreams that do not waken.

His hurt resentment softened to a tender regard for her welfare. He was moved to send her some message that



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might help her in some moment of peril. He had a superstitious feeling that it might act as a talisman to her, or at the very least as a reminder that he still existed and still thought of her.

He wrought upon a message and could make nothing better than this echo of his old call to her soul when it slept:

Dimny, Dimny Parcot. I am Noll Winsor. I love you, Dimny. I want to be your friend. Let me live for you or die in your place. Dimny, this is Noll Winsor.

It was insane, but it had a certain fervor that expressed his wild emotion, and he was afraid to let cold reason tamper with his exaltation.

He dared not send such a message by wire. He could not face the telegraph operator or the girl who would take the message and tap the words with her pencil as she counted them. He could see her look up as his exotic phrases caught her eye.

So he sealed the message in an envelope and, having no other address of hers and no immediate means of finding what ship sailed next, or when, addressed it to "Miss Dimny Parcot, care Cunard Co., New York," put a special-delivery stamp on it, and carried it down to the train. He hoped that it might catch her before she sailed, or that it might be delivered to her out at sea.

When the train came in he handed the letter up to the postal clerk, who took it without a suspicion of what madness it contained. But then he was used to handling parcels of mystery

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## CHAPTER XIII

AS luck would have it, Noll's letter was handed to Lane Sperling the second afternoon, while he was at the Cunard office taking up the tickets he had reserved for Dimny and Katherine and himself.

He gave it to Dimny when he called at the Devoe home with the passports.

Katherine cried: "Aha! a deadly rival. I knew she had a young man concealed somewhere. And a special-deviltry stamp on it, too!"

Dimny was puzzled. She took the letter, but did not recognize the handwriting. With a mumbled apology she opened it and glanced within at the signature.

When she read, "Noll Winsor," she said, "Oh!" She tried to say it casually, but the abrupt appearance of that name and all it connoted struck her wits awry.

She had not mentioned to Katherine or Sperling the fact of her long sojourn in Carthage. She could not explain Noll Winsor without explaining how she came to know him.

She saw that Sperling was wounded and that some ideal he had cherished of her had suffered a hurt. Katherine saw this, too, and made the most of it.

"Look at Sperly! He's turned a sickly green. What did you think, Sperly? That she had never seen a man before she saw you? Of course she said she had no young man, but I never believed her for a moment."

"Really!" Dimny protested, and could find nothing more explicit to say.

When she shook off Katherine and got to her room and read Noll Winsor's plea for remembrance, she was exquisitely distressed, for she did not want the love of men, not now, not that sort of love. She was a priestess ordained to one pitiful cause, and she was ashamed to find



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that she was making herself attractive in men's eyes. The very thoughts of sex and of romance were abhorrent to her. She felt besmirched and disloyal.

She turned to her passport, signed by the Secretary of State, Mr. W. J. Bryan. It was very grand in its diction.

The United States of America, Department of State, to all to whom these presents shall come, greeting. I, the undersigned, Secretary of State of the United States of America, hereby request all whom it may concern to permit Dimny Parcot, a citizen of the United States, safely and freely to pass and in case of need to give her all Aid and Protection.

In the margin was her description, and there was a line for her signature, and a statement that all this was "from under my hand and the seal of the Department of State at the City of Washington in the year 1914 and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and thirty-ninth."

With such sonorous authority and in all the panoply of citizenship Dimny ought to have felt powerful enough to confront the world. But what she read in the papers was not so comforting, knowing what she did of the German armament that knocked the steel and concrete fortresses of Liége to flinders, and of the torrents of soldiery that poured in all directions over all the surrounding lands, the millions and millions of men intrenched and squandering ammunition all day and all night. In many public statements it was exposed that the army of the United States was about twice the size of the police force of New York City; that the whole army would not half fill the Yale Bowl; that while there was almost no field artillery in the country, there was not ammunition enough in the country to feed even what little there was for more than one day; that it would take years to provide arms or ammunition; that the nation had not one field-mortar of large size; that helpless Belgium's army was larger and better equipped; that the navy was in a tragical, farcical state of unreadiness. The nation, indeed, was unable to resent even the atrocities committed against American persons and property in backward Mexico.



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Yet only a few people apparently were alarmed at this situation and they were called "alarmists." There was overwhelming hostility or indifference to preparation, to the increase of the army or its equipment, to the enlistment of a national force. There was fierce hostility to the manufacture of munitions for the Allies, though the Germans had on similar occasions sold munitions to warring nations and would have been welcome to ours if they could have got to them. One paper announced with gratification that Secretary-of-State Bryan had persuaded Mr. Schwab of Bethlehem to give up a large contract for the manufacture of submarines for England. Mr. Bryan encouragingly announced that when the need rose a million men would spring to arms overnight, though there were no arms to spring to, and the millions would not have known where to spring or what to do with them if they had been there.

The same paper announced that Count Reventlow in Germany was pleading for ruthlessness in the submarine warfare, even to the sinking of neutral ships without warning, but this was regarded as, of course, inconceivable. The upper hand was held by contemptuous persons who derided the advocates of preparation as "hystericals," as "militarists," as lusters after blood. They were said to be the "hirelings of the munition-workers."

One manufacturer of vast wealth chartered a ship to send missionaries to Europe to prate of peace at a long distance from the trenches; later he would charter whole pages in newspapers to publish everywhere his diatribes against the knaves and murderers who advocated preparedness and insisted that the inevitable was not impossible.

New York was in such financial distress that the vagrancy law was put in abeyance and soup-kitchens were busy with poverty. The charities were overtaxed by the extraordinary demands at home, yet the Belgian Relief Commission flew its first flag on the S.S. *Maskinonge* with a $300,000 cargo bound for Rotterdam, while Mr. Hoover was cabling for condensed milk to keep the 40,000 newborn Belgian children alive. Every day into New York trains were pouring contributions of food from all over the land, and the mails were full of prayers for dollars and



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pennies to save the Belgians. Millions of dollars' worth of flour and food went out on more ships sailing to Rotterdam, for the Rockefeller Foundation.

Also Dimny read in the morning head-lines: "Made clubmen sob with tales of woe. Irvin Cobb tells of Belgium's misery. Returned correspondent says only Recording Angel could describe horrors accurately." She wept, too, when she read the brief account of what he had seen before the Germans gathered him in and showed him only what they wanted him to see. It had been enough to turn the great-hearted humorist to a tragedian, yet who could have dreamed that three and a half years later he would stand on the deck of a ship and watch the torpedoed *Tuscania* sink with her freight of American soldiers?

The papers were full of pictures of Belgian refugees in England. Dimny wished that her mother and her sister might have fled thither. But that line in her sister's letter saying that they would not even seek the American Ambassador in Belgium gave her an intuition that they would rather hide than disclose themselves.

She longed for a partner in her secret. If Mrs. Devoe or Katherine had been of the type who offer hospitality to the sorrow of others, she might have taken them into her confidence. But they did not even understand their own solemnities; they mocked their own griefs when they had them.

There was a counter-fire of rage smoldering in some quarters, however, burning deeper and wider and hotter. And from this inner fire that would at last envelop the whole nation there flew already certain sparks, men and women of a quick prophetic soul, lovably inflammable, rich and poor, men and women, who builded hospitals, drove ambulances or airships, tended the wounded or the forlorn, or took up arms and faced death; good, brave people, worthy of eternal laurels—Doctor Blake, Doctor Carrel, Allan Seeger, Elliott Cowdin, Mrs. Wharton, Mrs. Atherton, Mrs. Vanderbilt, Maxine Elliott, Anne Morgan, Emery Pottle, Henry Sydnor Harrison, Guy Empey, Henry Sheahan, Arthur Gleason—a glorious few too many to name in such a place as this.



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Their characters were various, their motives many. Some went for pity's sweet sake and gave their hearts over to agonies of sympathy, their hands to ugly tasks; some were kindled by hatred of Germany and contempt for America's inertia. Sodom fell because not twenty good souls could be found to revenge the beastly insult to the angels, but the United States was redeemed by these hostages.

Americans did what America for three long years refused. And so on the ship that carried Dimny there were, besides Katherine Devoe and Lane Sperling, many who were drawn into the hell of Europe by their long heart-strings—Samaritans, men and women, advance agents of American altruism, uncommercial travelers, pioneers of the great remigration from the New World to the Old.

The *Transylvania* made a swift passage. The only dreadful thing about the voyage, so far as Dimny Parcot was concerned, was the devotion of Lane Sperling. She could not rebuke his love before he declared it, yet his eyes and his manner were as plain a statement of his cargo as a ship's manifest.

Katherine Devoe kept declaring it for him, too. She broke her promise to be seasick all the way across, or at least she did not keep to her cabin, though a kind of jaundice affected her soul. She went through the peculiar phase that people call a mean streak. It lasted the voyage out. When she was with Dimny she talked about Sperling's infatuation mercilessly, but when she kept away there was even more annoyance in her conspicuous absence.

Sperling was in a silly plight. When a man hears himself nagged at as the suitor of a girl before her face he cannot decently oppose the indictment; and he cannot gracefully accept it. When he is alone with her, the voice of the teaser is still present in echo and the dilemma remains.

Sperling grew to hate Katherine and he told her so—to her great delight. Laughter is one of love's worst enemies when love is young, and one of his best friends when love has settled down. Perhaps it was because



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Katherine could laugh so well at love that she frightened it away from herself. Perhaps it was a pathetic jealousy of Dimny that drove her to her impish humors.

Dimny could not take love lightly, because of the cloud upon her life. Sperling had no knowledge of what the cloud could be, but the solemnity of Dimny's mien won him to infatuation. He hungered to be of service to her and to make her his own. All sorts of theories tormented him as to the cause of the despondency she sank back into after every brief effort of cheer. But he could not give brain room to any theory that implied a fault of hers.

When Katherine was alone with him she was fertile in suggestions. She stuck them into him like pins to see him squirm.

"Dimny s nursing a secret sorrow," she would say. "It may be that man who sent her the letter. He must have missed the boat, or perhaps the letter said that he would meet her on the other shore. There may have been a secret marriage!"

Sperling got up and walked to the rail. Katherine scrambled out of her deck blankets and followed him. Then Sperling bolted to the men's smoking-room. Katherine smoked everywhere on the ship but there.

Thanks to Katherine's shrewish intimidation, Sperling could not bring himself to talk seriously to Dimny all the way across. On the last night of the voyage many people sat up late to see the first light of England dawning from the east.

Dimny was one of these. The nearness of England brought nearer the problem before her. It lost simplicity on approach. It had been an easy thing to avow in America that she would search Europe for her mother and her sister. She was the daughter of an explorer. But her father sought continents and fauna and flora in barren wildernesses of ice, while Dimny must seek two unfortunates among millions of unfortunates. She must hunt two who wanted not to be found and who preferred to be thought dead.

When she tried to plan her attack she could find no promising way to begin. Worst of all, suppose she found



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her mother and her sister—what would she do with them then?

Through no fault of their own they had been visited with a kind of leprosy, that made them flee the sight and knowledge of their fellows.

Thinking of that grisly word, she remembered the mother and sister of Ben-Hur and his search for them. She remembered that most pitiful scene when Ben-Hur fell down, worn out with vain hunting, and slept by the road-side, where the fugitive mother and sister found him and dared not waken him nor even caress him, but knelt and kissed the sole of his sandal and fled.

Dimny felt that her own mother and sister would do just that, if they caught sight of her before she found and claimed them.

Or if she held them fast, where would she lead them? What home could they find? How would they confront her father when he came back from the simple white bleak North? Those children to be—how could their mothers be cruel to them? Yet how be kind? How love them? How hate them? What could be done with them? It was a riddle the Sphinx would have envied, because nobody could solve it.

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## CHAPTER XIV

THE problem was almost a madness for Dimny. It was deeper and wider than the sea; it offered foothold nowhere, there were gulfs of horror everywhere. As she leaned against the rail the deck seemed to thrust her forward into the ocean. The waves summoned her, demanded her, one after another, each charging the ship and snarling as it failed. Yet always out of the illimitable came new waves.

She grew dizzy and felt a mystic compulsion to fling herself over and solve at least her own riddle. Hands seemed to press her shoulders. A little climb, a swift plunge, a gasp, a protesting struggle for breath, a strangle, and then profound peace, the cancellation of all the contradictions in one final perfect cipher.

She fell back from the rail, whether in terror of the giddiness or to make ready for the leap. She blundered into the arms of Lane Sperling, who had just found her and was approaching to speak to her.

Her hair brushed his lips, her heel crushed his instep, his hands clutched her elbows. She whirled in amazement and so strangely spun her round figure in his eager arms that he found himself still clasping her, after his lips had brushed her ear; and his cheek would have touched her mouth if she had not flung back her head.

An instant merely did he have possession of her, before both retreated, he mumbling, "I beg your pardon," and she, "How you frightened me!" Both laughed a little, and then found themselves leaning on the rail, staring in silence at the endless herds of billow-buffalo stampeding past the ship.

The long search Sperling made for something to say



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brought forth nothing more brilliant than, "Well, this is the last night of—this sort of thing."

That was one of Sperling's most likable traits. He could always be relied upon to say nothing brilliant. His remarks were as trite and true as his soul.

"So it seems," said Dimny, with equivalent brilliance.

A great deal of water went under the captain's bridge before Sperling could wrench from his timidity the speech he had prepared for just such a convention. He reached it by painful degrees.

"Katherine used to be a right nice girl, but I don't know what's got into her lately. She's been an awful pill on this voyage, hasn't she? A regular nuisance?"

Dimny mumbled, "She has been rather trying at times."

This assent encouraged Sperling vastly. He went on: "She's had a lot to say about—such a lot to say about my—my—er—about me being crazy about you. She hasn't left me a chance to say it myself.

"If this were a longer voyage I wouldn't be saying it now. But—it may be my last chance to tell you that Katherine told the truth in spite of herself; for I am as crazy as a loon about you. If the British accept me, I'll not have another chance to see you, maybe. But I want you to know that I'd be glad to jump into the drink there to get you any one of those bubbles you might pick out, if you said the word. I'd do more. I'd stay out of the war for you.

"Thousands of men are marrying girls in a hurry and rushing off to war. I might, too, if I were a Britisher, but it looks to me like a rather left-handed compliment to a girl to marry her and run for the trenches.

"You see, I am going into the army for two reasons: first because I think that every decent man on earth ought to do his damnedest—you know what I mean—to break the strangle-hold the Kaiser's got on humanity.

"But the second reason is—or was—a lack of anything else to do. I've been loafing too long. But if you've got anything to do that I can help you in—why, that would be job enough to make life worth living and I'd feel easy about not going to the war. It's none of my affair, of course, but



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I can see that you've got something worrying you, and if it's anything I could do for you, I wish to the Lord you'd set me at it."

Dimny was mightily tempted to enlist his aid, but he did not pause.

"What I'm driving at is—I'll marry you if you'll let me, but—well—that's pretty rough work even for me—but you understand me, don't you? The love I've got for you is marrying love."

There was a disconcerting silence from the deep shadow that she was. The waves blundering into the ship thumped and slashed, but Dimny said nothing. Part of her mind was trying to find something kind and tactful to say, but the rest of her soul was filled with a sudden feeling that the brigades of gray breakers marching toward the ship were made up of German regiments with helmets glistening and knapsacked shoulders huddling on and on and on. She remembered what her sister's letter had said about the vision of them as they flowed past the convent in Belgium like an eternal gray river. She shuddered with a revivified experience of what had happened and she heard, as if from far off, Sperling's anxious voice:

"Are you cold?"

"No—no, thanks," she answered.

"Did you hear what I said, or would you rather not answer?"

"Yes—oh yes, I heard, but I don't know what to answer. I can't tell you how grateful—"

"Grateful! Don't use the rotten word. It makes me sick. I'm just selfish. I'd like to make you grateful—afterward; but I want you to let me love you first. I'm dying now to grab you in my arms, and my heart's just cracking open with longing for you, Dimny."

In a storm of exultance at having told his love, he slid a trembling arm about her—hardly touching her.

She wanted not to hurt his pride, but those Prussian waves kept marching forward. As far as she could see, the Prussians were coming—no, they were Thuringians; they filled the world; they trampled everything; they claimed the sea, the land. She felt an arm tightening about her.



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She felt her body turned in strong arms toward a dark body, she smothered in their power, and a face bent closer, pallid beneath the visor of—a helmet!

She knew and yet did not know that it was only Lane Sperling. She appealed to him with a weakening clutch at reason:

"Don't—don't make me die—don't let me jump overboard. Take me away from the rail."

Stupefied and disenchanted, he helped her to the nearest deck chair and stood wondering which of them had gone mad. She was breathing frantically, wringing her hands and battling still with something that he could not understand. He wanted to beg her pardon humbly, but she startled him by saying: "Forgive me, and—and go away, please. I'll see you to-morrow."

He mumbled: "I'm sorry. Good night!" and walked away, but he paused behind a life-boat and watched. He saw her stretch herself out in the chair and fold her hands across her bosom as one who commends herself to sleep or death.

He did not know how nearly the same they were to her, or what a conflict was going on within her.

If Noll Winsor had seen her in that attitude he would have cried out in terror, feeling that she had sunk back again into that deathly stupor. He would have cried out to her—and, indeed, in his absence, unwittingly it was as if he did cry out, for as she drifted backward through the twilight toward the deep gloom she remembered the voice that had called to her in Carthage.

"Dimny! This is Noll Winsor. You must get well. You will succeed. I love you." His letter to her had refreshed the memory of his old help. Those who cry out encouragement to despondent humanity do not know all their reward nor all their accomplishment. Their voices ring on for years and recur in strange places, giving comfort to strange people as trees planted do long after; and songs fashioned, and helpful proverbs carved in stout phrases. So Noll Winsor's words had a longer reach than he knew. They were about Dimny now. His voice, reheard, replenished her courage once more.



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Poor Lane Sperling, befuddled and humiliated and frightened, saw, from where he lurked in ambush, that Dimny gradually fought off the apparent onset of sleep, rose wearily, and groped along the deck to the companion-way and descended it to her own state-room.

He lighted a number of cigarettes, but the wind whistled the smoke away along with all his theories.

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## CHAPTER XV

AMERICAN women went to Paris once for their fashions, and men to London for theirs, assured that what novel modes they saw there would prevail in America six months later. But now strange new fashions of costume, of thought, of amusement, grief, speech, disease, distress, death, swept over Europe, cutting her off from America utterly. Americans did not swarm abroad to import these fashions ahead of time. Americans ceased to go to Europe at all, except on war-business. And finding Europe what it was, they thanked Heaven, or they regretted, that the United States would not follow the styles of 1914. They thought America immune.

And yet the old rule did not fail. In London and Paris could be seen just what would be seen in American cities by and by: race hatred as a national emotion, emptied homes, broken lives, hearts never free of fear, ambitions all awry, careers diverted and destroyed, the male populace in uniform or explaining why not, the women taking up men's burdens and their own new griefs, the parks filled with troops at drill and wounded men become babies to be wheeled about again; the newspapers crammed with advertisements of destruction, of deaths, wounds, defeats minimized, victories maximized; everything askew, everybody ill of the war; and yet withal a strange intoxication of bravery, a curious opiate in the suffering nerves, a gathering together of fellow-countrymen and allies, a horror of foreigners, a suspicion of spies in all quarters, a prolonged panic that settles down into the normal condition, an exalted hysteria of superhuman endurances, with uncontrollable frenzies among some of the faculties and a deep coma among others, mankind vibrating between beast and angel, hyena and dove, the mob spirit at its most divine and at



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its most infernal, with humanity always above or beneath its natural pitch and never quite itself.

Dimny Parcot was to find Europe totally altered and never dream that she was but looking on a prefiguration of America, its emotions forecasting our own like fashion-plates seen long in advance of publication.

The morning of the day the *Transylvania* was to dock the ship had a new look. Its inhabitants were awake to the approach of England. Land was visible, and the water was populous with vessels, with dancing trawlers, ferocious torpedo-boat destroyers, merchant-ships inbound, and outbound ships riding low with a red water-line revealed. Two cruisers steamed slowly as if challenging trouble, and one dreadnaught wallowed along, an iron volcano adrift.

Dimny met Lane Sperling with bright eyes and a humble apology, and pressed his hand in a friendship that was a poor substitute for the love he had hoped to win, yet reassured him as to her health of mind and body and took his love in tow again. Katherine Devoe confessed that she had been a stupid beast and asked forgiveness.

She said that unless Dimny knew just where her mother would be, Dimny had better come with her to her brother's house instead of going to a hotel alone—"to an hôtel" she corrected herself, now that they were approaching the dictionary as well as the soil of England.

Lane Sperling also had relatives by marriage in England and proffered their hospitality for them. Dimny declined his gallantry, but again consented to be persuaded by Katherine, for she knew that her mother and sister would by no means meet her. Katherine was delayed awhile at the port because she had brought over on the ship with her her motor-car.

The cool New-Yorkish hospitality of Katherine had the advantage of its disadvantages. No excess of concern led her to ask uneasy questions.

London, when they reached it after the landing and a close inspection of passports and baggage, and a fleet dash by train, was nearly the London that Dimny had always known. The great train-shed was brilliantly lighted, for the Zeppelins had not yet made their début from the



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clouds; the streets were not dim; eyes had not learned the trick of glancing upward in the expectation that the sky-swimmers might come again and slaughter a few more citizens.

But it was plain that a war was on. The fabric of the throng was thickly interwoven with uniforms. There were women acting as conductors on the blundering busses. Women were quietly replacing the men everywhere. They were saving England, giving her suddenly in her need that public service that had been refused as a demand. The equality of the sexes was democratizing the Empire in a sudden and glorious fashion by no means painless.

Women were being shot forward a century in a month. They were goading the men to war, some offering white feathers to slackers, shaming the timid or the slow, robbing them of their last excuse: that they stayed at home to provide for their dependent women. The women would soon be not only independent, but earners of better wages than their husbands had made. They were taking the places of the men at home as chauffeurs, gardeners, clerks, secretaries, waiters. They would soon be going to the front—or at least the back of the front—as cooks, chauffeurs, clerks, tens of thousands of them wearing the uniform of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

England was proving herself, as Rupert Brooke thanked God, matched with her hour. In a splendor of devotion she stood ready for all the Armadas of her day, the Armadas that should come down from the heavens or come up from the sea, as well as the fleet that lay hiding in Kiel Canal, feeling, threatening, sending out an occasional patrol to bombard Scarborough or some other coast resort and kill a few women and children.

England had on this occasion at least as pure a conscience as ever nation had in war. She did not strike first; she did not strike at all till small peoples were marked for sacrifice. The proof of England's honesty was her unreadiness. Her fleet was there, of course; her land army was fit but few. She had flung what she had, rashly and splendidly, into France. Her men sold their lives dear in the grim retreat, but they sold them



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out. And England found herself practically destitute of troops and at war with the most perfect army that ever shook the earth.

But England kept redeeming her old follies and cruelties by new inspirations and decencies. Her colonies came back to her with love. Her conquered races gave troops to the Empire. The women who had kept up an unconquerable insurrection forgot their grievances and proved their fitness by their deeds. In the munition-factories they faced harder work and greater danger than the men in the trenches. On the farms, in the stables, in the railroad yards, women in filthy overalls, with oil and soot on their faces, grime on their hands and muck on their big-booted feet, would find a strange new happiness.

Dimny did not learn the extent of this revolution at once. Her first strong impression was the personal one of her own reception. London's hospitality struck her as even colder than New York's. When she got inside the crust she would find it warm and sweet, but she felt repulsed and shut out at first. When she reached Katherine's brother's house she found it dismal, cold, and dully illuminated within. There were many people present, and they were discussing various problems. There had been a revolution in conversation as in everything else.

Katherine's brother was away. Her English sister-in-law said, "Why, hello, Katherine!" without rising from her chair. She put up a cheek to be kissed instead of her lips to kiss. She greeted Katherine's arrival from the ocean with cordiality as devoid of excitement as if Katherine had just come in from the garden.

When Dimny was introduced, Mrs. Devoe did not rise, did not cry her welcome, did not even introduce Dimny to any of the other guests; nor did they stop talking. All the women, old and young, were smoking. The servants were taking care of the luggage. The intention was to make the guests feel that they had caused no inconvenience. That was a greater tribute in England than Dimny understood. Mrs. Devoe was beautifully English — what Katherine called "Burnt Jones." She wore a most becoming black. She said:



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"Your old room is ready, Katherine, and Miss Parcot is next to you. Will you have something to eat? No? The cigarettes are back of you. Mrs. Manby was just telling the drollest experience she had as a charwoman and the withering contempt of a real charwoman. Do go on, dear Mrs. Manby."

Dimny and Katherine went to their rooms and freshened up a bit. Dimny's room was bitter cold, even colder than the drawing-room. Steam heat was one of the American vices that had not yet invaded this home. When Dimny returned to the cold, cold drawing-room, she was received with polite tolerance.

Dimny dropped into a chair, as near the fireplace as she could get, and felt cruelly ignored and nullified, as Americans usually do at first in England till they learn the language. By and by a young man who had come in while she was in her room began to talk to her without revealing any curiosity as to her name or any boastfulness as to his own. Their common presence in Mrs. Devoe's drawing-room was evidently supposed to vouch for both of them.

But Dimny was timid, and she found nothing to talk of, since he did not ask about her nor tell about himself. She had not expected him to speak. His accent (everybody has an accent) seemed very broad in her ear, as hers in his when he heard it.

"You're just ovah from the States, I expect," he said.

Dimny was startled; she nodded slightly.

He went on: "Is it true that your government is goin' to stand off and look on while Belgium and Frahnce perish, and old Blighty—I mean to say the old mothah-country—goes to pot? And nevah make so much of a protest to Germany as an 'Oh, I say now!' What?"

"I reckon so. It looks so," Dimny murmured, feeling as if she were responsible for the inaction.

"But tell me—you don't mind my bein' so brutally frank, do you?—tell me, does nobody ovah thuh realize that your country is the—ah—next numbah on the program?"

"A few of us," sighed Dimny; "only a few of us."



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"Do you know I call that too bad. I am afraid that deah old Uncle Sam is what we should call a—if you'll pahdon me—a slackah. I fear we shall have to present him with the—ah—white feathah. Reahlly!"

Dimny could not answer this both with patriotism and with conviction. He saw her plight.

"Mind you, I'm not ahskin' you to admit it. If I ware a Yankee, I should jolly well slap myself in the face if I insulted my country, but nevahtheless—if you know what I mean—well, it's a pity, isn't it? You know what I mean.

"It's most unpleasant fighting the boche. He's clevah, no end, but such a hopeless rottah. And he compels us to follow him. I happened to be at the fust little surprise-pahty. That's why I'm heah. I fancy you ware wondering why such a hulkin' brute as I look should be sittin' heah in Helen's drawing-room attacking a paw gel from ovah the watah instead of annoyin' the boche in Frahnce. But you see, I chahnced to be one of the unfawtunate membahs of the Expedition'ry Fawce. Yes, I was with Haig—S'Douglas, you know—the Fust Kaw, at Mons and all the way back, if you'll pahdon my buckin' about myself."

There are great defeats that nations cherish with almost more pride than their victories. The calamity at Mons will always be spoken of with haughtiness by the English.

Dimny was keenly interested in meeting any one who had actually opposed his own force to the German on-rush. "Oh, do tell me all about it," she cried, "if you don't mind."

"Mind? God bless my soul, I'd love it. I cahn't get anybody else to listen. Those who haven't gone out are talkin' about what they'll do when they do, and so many of us have come back—and so many of us didn't—you know what I mean—paw fellahs! And the newspapahs have described it all so much bettah than we can—they haven't been—ah—hampah'd by the little details, you know. And I'm no Kiplin', you know, but if you're quite shaw I shahn't baw you—"

"I'd love it," said Dimny. "Please!"

He told the truth when he said that he was no Kipling. Some men have the gift of incurring adventure and some of



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describing it. Dimny's anonymous hero was of the former sort.

"I was with the Fust Kaw of the Expedition'ry Fawce, if you know what I mean. They picked us up and tossed us ovah to Frahnce as a kind of sop to the German monstah. It was at Mons—stupid little spot—that the blightahs—if you'll pahdon me—smashed us fust. Most of my little commahnd ware swimmin' in a canal. They needed the bahth, Heaven knows. The Uhlans came from nowheah and made excellent pig-stickin' of us for a time, but my men fought in the—ah—altogethah, if you know what I mean. We held 'em Saturday, and all night Sunday. Then there was nothin' for it but we must cut. So we made off to the south at toppin' speed. We stopped when we ware out of wind, and when they caught us up, we showed them a pretty fight. But they outnumbah'd us three to one, and soon they hoicked us out of theah, and we made off again. We got in a hundred miles of fight-all-day-and-run-all-night.

"We mahched back through the Forest of Mormal—doleful old woods, too—and rested at Landrécies. We lay on ouah faces in the streets in the rain at night and fought by the light of burnin' buildin's. We mopped up the boches, but there was no end to them, and away we went again, tryin' to keep in touch with the French. Back we went to the Aisne Rivah—then to the Marne; for thutteen days we fell back and back.

"Just once, towahd the lahst, just befaw old General Joffre gave the awda to cease runnin' and go fawwahd, I saw a bit of funk. My platoon was the reah-guahd of the reah-guahd, and I had gone back a bit to pick out ouah next position. The woods opened—it rained Germans from all sides. I saw the line wavah. One or two blightahs dropped their rifles and ran like rabbits. The reah-guahd can nevvah hope for reinfawcements, of cawse, and it is hahdish work not to retreat a little fastah than necess'ry. But I was in a wax at my men, let me tell you. I dahted fawwahd, yelling, 'Oh, I say, my lads, this will nevah do, you know, nevah.'

"One of the men said, 'I was just 'oppin' back, seh, for



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a bit of a runnin' stawt, strike me if I wasn't, seh.' And he ran in, caught up a dead man's rifle and stuck it into three boches in rapid succession just befaw three othah boches potted him. I was on the point of shoutin' 'Well bowled, old thing!' when the bullet that had been booked for me found its billet, and I shouted 'Blub-blub' or wuds to that effect and went rollin' ovah and ovah like a silly plovah caught on the rise. That ended my fightin'."

"I'm so sorry for you," Dimny sighed.

"For me? You're not havin' me on, are you?" he gasped. "Oh, I say, that is decent of you; but really, I've no right to it, you know. I'm heah—in toppin' fawm—happy—and almost outside my wound. On my soul, I don't know why I'm tellin' you all this, except that I've not been quite right since—I've told everybody else till they all flee at the sight of me. But it's my fust waw, you know, and I dare say I shall learn to be maw quiet when I have maw int'restin' things to tell."

"You're not going back?" Dimny cried.

"Do you think I'll stop at home? Likely! But they'll doubtless have somethin' new by now, and we shall have to toddle after them.

"It's the fust time London evah took her fashion-plates from Berlin. We shall have to take so much from Berlin till we get ready to give them what-faw. We have to make rifles and cahtridges, guns, shells, bayonets, grenades, trucks—everything—and learn the A B C's while they show us the X Y Zeds.

"Fawtunately, Uncle Sam has consented to sell us what he can make. That will help. And one day the boches will drive him in in spite of himself. It's going to cost the wahld a pretty bill, but we cahn't affawd to pay what the boches ahsk. We really cahn't affawd that."

In the prolonged silence that followed the Englishman's outburst, Dimny overheard phrases from other groups. She had observed near her two elderly women of an appalling aristocracy of manner in spite of, or because of, the Gothic shoulder-blades obtruding from their black gowns. They were discussing atrocities. She heard one of them saying:



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"The worst things can't be told or printed, of course. The victims of the worst outrages naturally do all they can to keep them secret. But things leak out. I was talking yesterday to Lettice Staight—you know her? Sweet girl—her husband was killed. She can't get his body back, poor thing; she thought she would go mad without something to do. What do you suppose she has taken up, or have you heard?"

"I think not."

"She is a Catholic, you know—one of the old families. And she has turned her beautiful house to the oddest use."

The man asked Dimny if he could fetch her a cup of tea or a whisky-and-soda. She shook her head and heard the elderly woman going on:

"She has eight nuns and novices as her guests and patients, all of them, my dear— Bend a little closer."

Dimny could not hear. But she heard the other woman give a little cry; then the speaker went on:

"Horrible, isn't it? But the worst of it is, whatever can the poor things do with the children when they arrive? They'd be Germans, wouldn't they? How could even a mother's love overcome that fact?"

Dimny could hear no more, for the young man, either because he had not heard, or because he had, began to talk again.



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## CHAPTER XVI

BUT Dimny did not listen. She was thinking hard. The elderly woman had spoken of some one who nursed Belgian nuns and novices. Some of these might have been at the very convent where Dimny's own mother and sister had been.

Of course, it was improbable that such good fortune should come to meet her on her first night in England, but she might at least get some clue, some help. Anything at all that she could learn would be of help, for she knew nothing, nor how to set about finding out anything.

She lacked the courage to address the old lady—her mien was rather terrifying—till at length she rose to leave. The man rose, too. Dimny checked him with a word, and he bent low from his great height to her.

"I beg your pardon, but could you tell me who the—the elderly woman is over there?"

"Which? I see two."

"The old one that looks like an eagle."

"Oh, that's Mothah."

"Oh, I didn't mean—"

"Don't apologize. I'm shaw she'd rahthah resemble an eagle than any othah bahd."

"I—I wanted to ask her something."

"Why don't you?"

"I'm afraid. I've never met her."

"She's not hahf so haughty as she looks. Come along. I'm not afraid of hah. Oh, Mothah—I want to present Miss—ah—Miss—"

"Miss Parcot."

"Miss Parcot," he echoed. "She's stoppin' with Helen. She's Amirrican, of cawse."

"I could tell that by your excellent clothes, Miss Parcot."



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Rather gracious for the eagle! She went on: "I'll see you anothah time, I hope. You must come to me with Helen one day. Good night."

"I—" Dimny had not even yet learned her name or her son's. "May I ask you an impertinent question?"

"It's not likely you could. But please—"

"I couldn't help overhearing you speak of the—the poor widow—I didn't catch her name—you said she was caring for some Belgians."

"I fancy you mean Mrs. Staight."

"Yes. I—I hardly know how to put it, but I—I'm awfully anxious to meet those Belgians. They—I—I'm going to Belgium."

"Indeed! But will you be let?"

"Oh, I have a passport from our Secretary of State. He especially mentions Belgium."

"The Secret'ry of State, indeed! How very interesting! You are quite sure they will pass you?"

"Nothing can stop me."

"I wonder—"

She turned to the other woman.

"Oh, I say, my dear, would you mind? Miss Parcot—is that it?—Miss Parcot tells me she is going into Belgium, and it occurred to me that perhaps she could be of assistance in getting word to your poor daughter. Mrs. Curfey has a child astray over there."

The other woman's face lost its hardness; or rather, a sudden relaxation showed that it was due, as hardness usually is, to a grim effort not to break under burdens. She cried:

"Oh, if you could! If only you could! My daughter—I left her in a convent there, you know; and I can get no word from her—not a word. She's English, of course, and the German beasts won't let her go, or even communicate with us. They are afraid she has seen too much, I expect; and I'm so afraid of what she has seen. Such a number of English mothers are unable to learn of their daughters. We have a committee. We poor mothers seem to be able to do nothing but form committees. I belong to a dozen, and I'm sure I don't know what they are all about. But one of



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them is trying to get word of the lost girls. We have the names of eighty-six, utterly lost. My child, poor Ethel, was coming home for Christmas; the last letter I had was written the first day of August—she was already at work on her Christmas gift for me, never dreaming of what was in store for us. And now this frightful, frightful thing! However can we bear it?"

The poor woman had nearly lost her self-control. She was more mother than Englishwoman, but she did not know how to let herself go. Dimny was beginning to perceive something of the enormity of the war—its incalculably cruel devastation. She was just touching the farthest fringe of it.

"But," Mrs. Curfey was saying, "your entry into Belgium—how do you dare attempt it?"

"I must," Dimny sighed, letting her secret go under the compulsion of the moment. "My mother and my sister are there, too."

"Dimny!" Katherine cried. "You never told me!"

"I've been afraid to speak of it. I didn't mean to, but—"

Katherine expressed what words could not say, in a fierce embrace of pity. Both of the elderly women looked the sympathy they could not voice. Helen Devoe drew nearer. The eagle lady said:

"My son himself shall take you to Mrs. Staight—tomorrow, if you wish. And after, if you will be so good, do let us tell you the names of a few of these girls. If we could know even that they are alive, that would be something, wouldn't it? There are many German girls here, too; perhaps we could offer them in exchange; their parents must be as frantic as we are, though it seems hard to credit the Germans with ordinary humanity. Still, even the fiercest animals love their own young, don't they? But you are so young yourself, my dear; I am afraid you are taking on a task that would daunt a far older woman."

Her son spoke in: "No fear! She'll do the trick. Bein' young is better than knowin' too much. Miss Parcot can stand anything—she heard my whole story out, and never winced once."



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Dimny was inside the crust now, and there was no question of the warmth. It embarrassed her to be so besought. When good-nights were exchanged, and the guests had left, Helen treated Dimny with a new respect. Dimny, however, was curious:

"But who are they? Their names? I heard Mrs. Curfey's—but the others?" She rather expected to be told that the eagle was the countess of something or other, and the young man whatever the son of a countess would be. To Americans, England is inhabited exclusively by coronets and cockneys. But Helen gave them plain names:

"That was Mrs. Roantree and her son, Leftenant Gilbert Roantree. Mrs. Curfey, whose daughter is lost, has had two boys in the army—trying to get into Belgium by fighting. One of them was killed alongside Gilbert Roantree."

"Killed?" Dimny sighed. This was her first encounter with death in the war. She protested:

"But Mrs. Curfey wasn't in mourning."

"It's not being worn outside the house. We've nearly all lost somebody. My Cousin John—my beautiful Cousin John—blind—blind! And my brother dead."

She fell forward, weeping.

Dimny caught her in her arms.

Helen wrenched free and paced the floor in a curious rage, striking the tears from her cheeks viciously. She caught a cigarette, lighted it, and smoked in short puffs like an angry man. She was enraged at the ancient weakness, the overbubbling grief that she could not master.

"Damn these rotten tears!" she groaned, beating her palms together, clutching at her throat, and swallowing back the sobs that pounded there. She had been a good sportswoman, raised like a boy; she had fought stubborn horses across walls and water-jumps they were afraid of. She had fought for the vote the same way.

And now that Death struck his bony hand among her heartstrings, she hated to weep.

Dimny watched Helen's combat with nature, and wept for her. Helen saw her, and patted her shaken shoulders



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awkwardly, but still strode up and down the room, strangling and muttering:

"My brother was man enough to die, and Johnny gave his eyes. The men can give themselves. But we fool women—why won't they let me go fight? I can shoot; I can ride. I want to kill somebody. I want to kill the enemies of England!"

It is a wonderful cry, "England!" when they lift their voices to it.

"I want to be a soldier, and fight, but I stay at home and knit and make bandages and cry like a b-b-bleeding baby."

Dimny did not understand what blasphemy was in that epithet. It meant nothing much to her, but to Helen it was an outburst of that frenzy in which nice, clean people are so driven out of themselves that they go back to childhood and grope in the dirt for something foul enough to throw at the bullying fates.

Being a lady hurled back into common humanity, Helen felt properly ashamed of herself, and that perfected her misery.

"Good night!" she said, and was gone.

Katherine had also lost the gentle art of weeping gracefully. She stood ill at ease, suffering in awkwardness. She filled herself a long glass of whisky and soda, offered one in pantomime to Dimny, and when she shook her head, tried to gulp a sob in a yawn and said:

"God-awful, isn't it?"

Dimny nodded, and they went slowly up the long stairs. Katherine lingered a moment at Dimny's door, trying to find something to say, then kissed her good night and went on to her room.

Dimny closed her door and felt herself but an atom of woe in a universe of swirling wretchedness. In the room were portraits of soldiers and sailors, and of athletes, pictures of a castle or two, and flags.

Suddenly she felt how preoccupied all England must be with the problem of its own existence. That ancient heritage, the British Empire, was facing the greatest emergency of its career. Its glory or its doom rested on the shoulders



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of these men and women. They were laying aside their customs and flinging away their lives, all solemnly resolved not to let Great Britain fail.

On Dimny's table were two or three illustrated weeklies. There were comic pictures by those ministering angels, the bright brave souls who could find laughter in this tragedy, the modern wearers of the cap and bells—Bairnsfather, Heath Robinson, the *Punch* galaxy never so witty, so calmly droll, as now. England like another King Lear needed devoted, beloved Shakespearean fools, and they were busy and brave and blithe for England's sake.

But the pages that gripped Dimny most were the pages called "The Roll of Honour." They were like windows crowded with eager faces of the dead. Youth and grizzled age were here, subalterns and generals, commoners from the provinces and noblemen of ancient names.

All looked forth uncannily alive and were recorded as dead. There were Brig.-Gen. Sir J. E. Swinnerton, C. B. C. M. G. D. S. O.; and Lieut. the Hon. Lethbridge Marsland; Lieut.-Col. G. Arthur Nicolls-Platt, V. C.; Capt. W. G. S. Beart, M. C.; and plain Major William Smith, and many, many another.

It was unbearable that they should have died so nobly, so needlessly. Dimny's imagination saw their wrecked, mangled forms, their bright faces distorted with wounds and anguish. Yet these were but the selected dead. For each of these a hundred or a thousand less conspicuous men had fallen. The hospitals were packed with the wounded.

All of them had families, somebody to mourn and multiply their loss, somebody to fight tears and deny the poor comfort of crape for their sakes. Indeed, there were on other pages the grievous images of widows, many of them pictured as veiled brides, smiling, many of them with children about them.

They smiled, too, for life had been zestful to them then; they had not dreamed, when they posed, that they would be published as widows. There were widows everywhere, and it was only the beginning of the prelude.

Somehow these pictures gave Dimny a keener feeling of



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the waste of the war than all the statistics, the head-lines or editorials. War was taking busy men from their homes and their usefulness and actually slaughtering them. War was unwearyingly turning warm-bodied, fruitful, laughter-loving women into cold, frustrated, lonely-nighted widows. It was a devil's mill for grinding men and women into corpses and relicts.

Innumerable people were crying, reaching out empty arms to fate and begging it to give back their loves. How happy the world had been before the war, and how little aware of its felicity! How wretched the world was now, and how well aware of that.

Dimny put away the periodicals with a moan:

"Oh dear—oh dear! the poor people!"

In a flood of pity for all the bereaved she began to cry again. She was sorry for the world.

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## CHAPTER XVII

AT ten the next morning Captain Roantree was announced. He was in uniform again, the business-like new British uniform with its low-rolling lapels, its soft collar, its pockets as capacious as knapsacks and the Sam Browne belt over all.

Dimny felt a little nervous at first about being alone with him, when they set forth in his motor-car, but she told herself that she would have many strange men to meet in many strange places before her quest was ended. Everybody in the house had some war-work ahead, and it was no time for girls to expect chaperons.

She began to realize how rash she was to add new commissions to her task. She was to find, and restore to their parents, other girls—she that could hardly cope with the problem of finding her own people. It was an effort at solution by multiplication. Yet she was glad, in a way, because she would have a mission at last that she could declare openly while she concealed her true errand in Europe.

They spun through Hyde Park, populous now with wounded men, and soldiers on leave. The old splendor of the Hyde Park parade was gone, and in its place was something far more splendid. The misty pallor gave an unearthly light to the pageant. The once ubiquitous top-hat was hardly to be seen. A military or a naval cap adorned nearly every head. On the paths wounded men, instead of babies, were wheeled in perambulators; others went crutchwise. Ladies of evident position no longer lolled in victorias behind high-pulpited coachmen and footmen with folded arms; folded arms were not being worn in England. Ladies were steering their own motors, and their motors were filled with bandaged soldiers, strange guests



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whose letters of introduction were red wounds. Yet laughter was brave on all sides, and flirtations of a sort were in negotiation everywhere, and on the meadows lines of volunteers drilled in mufti. The air was filled with war.

Mrs. Staight's home was in the outskirts of the shapeless, sprawling town. She dwelt on one of the score of High streets in London. Walls surrounded the house, and only the tree-tops peering over gave a hint of hidden gardens. It was city outside and country within.

There was a bell in the gate, and its remote tinkle fetched a maid across a lawn, still green in the English midwinter. The maid admitted them and went to fetch her mistress.

Roantree made the introductions and announced that he would wait outside in the car. It was no place for a man.

Dimny stated the case of the missing school-girls and her desire to learn something of what she would find in Belgium.

Mrs. Staight went out and returned, a sorrowing shepherdess with the saddest of flocks.

The women had a racial resemblance, but otherwise they were of various types, tall, small, lean, plump, stolid, feverish. Yet they had all endured the same experiences.

These girls, whom their parents had put away behind walls among white-robed priestesses in order that they might escape the corruptions of every-day life, had been trapped in their refuge and smothered in a cataclysm of beastliness. They had endured what the nuns of Rome endured almost four hundred years before, when Rome was sacked—by German soldiers then as now in what Sismondi called "the first triumph of barbarism over civilization." And then as now the English and the French were driven from their ancient feud into an alliance against Teutonic ruthlessness.

Like the helpless victims of unearned deformity, these young women from Belgium slunk into the room, where Dimny studied them with pity and terror. In their eyes strange visions lurked. About them was a pall of tragedy. And yet they were already used to their fate and ready for their future. All of them carried things to sew, and their deft Belgian fingers, habited to making lace, were



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making tiny wardrobes as young wives do when love has brought them into the fold of wedlock. Cruelty had been fantastic and tangled with them, and they were benumbed with the hopelessness of their lives.

Dimny felt it brutal even to question them, but she could not go without asking some news. Most of the women had learned a bit of English during their exile. They spoke it with varied accent according as they were of Walloon or Flemish stock.

When Mrs. Staight had explained Dimny's errand briefly, Dimny asked:

"Were you by any chance at the convent in Dofnay?"

The women exchanged questioning glances; then one of them asked:

"Convent? Ve do nut onnerstan' pretty good Angleesh!"

Dimny rewrought it in her French:

"*Est-ce que vous avez été au couvent de Dofnay?*"

Half of them understood this. They shook their heads.

"*Non, mademoiselle.*"

Dimny thought that perhaps they might have met her mother and sister, none the less. She asked if they had known, by any chance, a Mrs. Parcot. One answered for all:

"*Non, je ne la connais pas.* I do not know somebody of zose name."

Dimny had thought of Belgium as a little realm where everybody would know everybody. She was to learn how large the littlest nation is when misery invades it. More than fifty thousand homes had been destroyed in Belgium, towns and villages by the hundred, farmsteads beyond reckoning or recognition; and the devastation had only begun.

Dimny gained little from her visit to this hiding-place except a hope that her mother and sister might be meeting their kindred lot with a like bravery.

Mrs. Staight told her something of the multitudes of Belgians similarly scattered among families in the cities and the countryside. Already myriads on myriads of them had arrived; and still they came and would come in every sort of boat and barge until the summer should find in England



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two hundred and sixty-five thousand Belgian fugitives and forty thousand wounded Belgian soldiers. The place of greatest resort was the clearing station at Earl's Court where the immigrants were received, card-catalogued and passed on to their various destinies.

Captain Roantree offered to motor her thither.

"It's a longish spin, but—"

"Yes, when I was a little girl my father took me there. I remember it was a sort of Coney Island place. Oh dear! oh dear!"

She was thinking of the laughing, vanished days when her father and mother had crossed the ocean together to share in his honors from learned societies and from monarchs. After her father had lectured on his explorations and been made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, the family had gone on a picnic to Earl's Court for the children's sake.

She could see herself and her sister clinging to their father's hands and dragging him contrariwise to take in the childish gaieties. And now her father was somewhere in Arctic realms, and her mother and sister were where?

The destinies of Earl's Court had changed as much as those of her people. The throngs of pleasure-loafers had changed to throngs of Belgians doomed to loaf in exile; the interior of Alexandra Palace was a sea of cots where thousands slept who had no other shelter.

Captain Roantree led Dimny through the bewildered idlers to the registry office. But the great card-index there failed to reveal any one named Parcot.

Everywhere Dimny went she met the more or less masked resentment at America's abstention from the war. America, the boastful monopolist of liberty, stood off and sold goods and was chiefly concerned about an exquisitely nice neutrality while the liberty of the world was assailed.

The rash and the hot-headed are not always the fools. Those who think longest and compute most cautiously are not always the most saving. Since it was to come about that America should enter the war at last, what mountains of gold, what fleets of ships, what millions of lives, what



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hells of suffering would have been saved if the entrance had been made like England's after a short, sharp decision!

Dimny spent several days pursuing false hopes of finding her mother and sister in some of the refugee nests in England. Christmas Day passed meanwhile, a holiday of courageous effort at merrymaking in lonely home and frozen trench for all the nations. It was Dimny's first Christmas without her people, and it was bitter hard for her. She felt like a lost child crying for her mother in a jungle.

She was convinced that they were not in England, and she began to make inquiries as to the routes to Belgium. She learned first that she must enter by way of Holland, and she found herself turning naturally to Gilbert Roantree as her courier.

He was delighted to fag for her. He promised her "the info." the next morning.

The next morning brought the maid to her with the word:

"An officer to see you—I couldn't catch his name."

She went down with her greeting ready for the charming Captain Roantree. She found a British uniform with its back to her. She did not recognize the back. At the sound of her step Lane Sperling's face whirled into view.

"Mr. Sperling!" she gasped.

"Leftenant Sperling, by your leave."

"I didn't know you."

"I don't wonder. I hardly know myself."

"But your uniform—it's English, isn't it!"

"Yes, and so am I. At least I'm no longer a Yankee. Took the oath of allegiance to the King yesterday, and now I feel like the man without a country."

"No!" There was a tone of protesting horror in her voice.

"Yes," he confessed, I've forsworn the President, and I'm in for it. If America wants me again, she'll have to come over to France and get me. That's where all good Americans go when they die. And they belong there now."

He slapped his boots with his swagger stick and mimicked Piccadillyese:

"I'm a little bit of all right—what?"



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But Dimny saw that the renunciation was a tragedy to him, and he was only trying to face it through. She was in no humor to underrate the sacrifice.

"I wish I could wear the same uniform," she said, as she gave him her hand.

"Why don't you? Look at me!"

Katherine Devoe had wandered in unbeknownst. She wore a feminized version of Sperling's garb—a cap, a khaki coat with long skirts not quite disguising the breeches beneath, with puttees greaving her slim shins.

"Katherine!" Dimny cried.

"Ambulance-driver to His Majesty!" said Katherine, saluting with a comic-opera effect. She was still woman enough to circle slowly and say: "How does it hang in the back? I had it made in such a hurry I had to take what they gave me."

"It's beautiful," said Dimny. "Ever so much more becoming than the bare shoulders and silk stockings you wear to dance in."

"My little car is being remodeled, too, with little shelves for wounded soldiers. This is the life, Dimny. Better jump into a uniform and come along."

"If only I could!"

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## CHAPTER XVIII

BOTH Captain Roantree and Lieutenant Sperling wanted to escort Dimny to Rotterdam and beyond. They would have escorted her to heaven gladly, and quarreled all the way up the ladder. But Holland was maintaining her neutrality with a pride in inverse ratio to her size, and the uniforms of both men would have required their internment as prisoners. They would have then been of no help to anybody, least of all to Dimny.

The sole consolation of each was that the other could not go, either. They insisted on going as far as the Batavier-line pier where she would take the boat. Since Antwerp had fallen into German hands, the direct line was closed, and no English boats were running.

They saw her bestowed in her state-room, bade her stilted good-bys, and wished her good luck. That was all either could say in the presence of his rival—though the word is overstrong, since neither had any claim upon her beyond his readiness to live or die for her—after their country had finished with them.

They watched the boat set forth into the rough black Thames.

Sperling groaned, "One damfine girl!"

Roantree growled, "Nice kid!"

The next morning Dimny was on deck very betimes for the landing at Rotterdam. She had learned in London that the express no longer ran from Rotterdam to Antwerp —that the railroad was indeed torn up between Antwerp and the frontier of Holland. She had figured it out that, once she reached the border, she could pass the sentry-line by means of her passport and resume her journey.

She learned that the train would not leave for several hours, if then. The war had upset all schedules, and



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Holland had four hundred thousand troops under arms as guardians of her integrity; and they had to be supplied. Also the hundreds of thousands of refugees had to be supplied in their numberless resting-places. And Holland was feeding hundreds of thousands of Belgians in Belgium.

The journey that should have taken one hour took several.

She got out at Rosendaal and made inquiries at the Custom-House concerning the best point of entry into Belgium. She was strongly assured that she would be turned back at the border; her passport was useless. She was entreated not to brave the German guard. She was assured that the gentle treatment of women was not in the German regulations. She would be arrested, searched, imprisoned, perhaps shot as a spy.

She was convinced at last that she could not proceed formally. But she was not convinced that she must give up her mission.

An impulse moved her to try to steal across the line. She left the big station and walked through the dreary town. Fifteen thousand people it had had before the war, and in a few days from fifty to a hundred thousand men, women, and children flung themselves down upon it, spent with flight from captured Antwerp. On Bergen-op-Zoom three hundred thousand descended. The dead towns woke. Somehow the invaders were sheltered and fed. Cattle were "milked almost into the mouths of the little Belgians." In one big factory-building six thousand were housed. They slept in straw in a huddle of promiscuity. Gradually they were shipped to other parts of Holland and to England, the government running long trains without cost. But thousands still remained in Rosendaal.

Dimny saw on the walls many names still written as a tragic directory eloquent of that panic. Fathers who had lost their children, and children who had lost their parents, had inscribed their names and their destinations, or had had them written by others.

"*Marie van der Meylen est en route pour Capellen.*"

"*Charles Franken, ton petit garçon est à Capellen avec ton frère Jean.*"



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Dimny wept to read a childish scrawl, "*Nanette a passé par ici.*" Nanette had not felt the need of giving her last name; she had not known where she was going. Dimny wondered if she had ever found her parents. Thousands of children never did.

A priest at Rosendaal had set some of the tiny fugitives on his pulpit and called out: "Whose pretty little girl is this? Whose nice boy is this?" The papers published groups of child-portraits under the heading, "Who will help us hunt? *Wie helpt uns zoeken?*"

A fond hope that perhaps she might find her own lost in this throng led Dimny to wander aimlessly. She saw wagons turned into homes; a great colony occupied tents furnished by the Dutch army. This was the army of the fugitives—the *vluchtelingen.* Dimny strolled among the *émigrés,* looking, looking, wondering always if her mother and sister might not be crouched before the next fire, fearing that they might perhaps be hidden from her in the last closed tent.

Quietly as Dimny was dressed, she was a princess among these shabby folk, many of whom had been richer than she.

By and by she heard a voice in English among the Flemish, the Walloon, and other dialects that she could not understand.

"Scuse me, lady—you was American, yes?"

She turned and caught the smile of a soldier who was trying to rise from the ground, his feet caught in a hole in the long skirt of his great shabby overcoat. He approached Dimny and pulled his cap off, spilling a lot of curls. He would have been the neater for a shave, but there was a certain breeding in his bearing.

"I theenked you was American from how you look. Me, I am American, too, not quite."

Dimny could imagine nothing to say except a polite laughing, "Are you?"

"Did you ever been in Brookleen?"

"I am not sure," she said. He laughed louder. "Not sure about to been in Brookleen? I am there for the *caoutchouc*—the rubber beesness. I come over to veesit my mawther choost before the war is broke out. I am re-



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servist. They call me to the army of La Belgique. I am in Anvers—Antwerp you say—ven she is fell.

"I cannot escape with the King and Queen and our army, for I am in the fortress of Oudendyk. The bridge is blew up between us, and I must run to here. Is no escape, and here I must render myself to the Hollandais. I am prees-oner. I am on a pass for to-day only. It is great fortune I find my mother and seester, their names on the walls at Rosendaal. They have now a fine home. See? Good air—vat you call in America nice slipping-porch and kitchen-ette—yes? Elevators, doomb vetter, everytheeng."

Dimny smiled at his good sportsmanship and asked him, eagerly:

"Your mother and sister—do they come from Dofnay perhaps?"

"Dofnay, no? But from Aerschot. But you shall meet my mother and seester—yes?"

He led Dimny forward and made the presentations formally, introducing her as "*une demoiselle américaine.*" Though they were seated like gipsies on the ground about a smoky camp-fire, they bowed their heads with courtliness. The mother offered Dimny a place on the earth at her side as if it were a royal divan. The daughter insisted on her joining them in the stew that bubbled in the kettle. Dimny accepted to avoid offense.

She explained her mission and found that it gave these helpless ones a thrill of pride to be appealed to for help. They had drawn so heavily on the help of strangers. Dimny told of the uselessness of her passport and her determination to cross the line without authority, if it could be done.

"It could be. It is," said the soldier. "Letters go across every days. There is a post. For a few francs you can have a letter deleevered in Belgium, or a paper from London. The Germans are furious, but they cannot stop it.

"All the time, too, men and vomen go and come. Sometimes they are caught, but sometimes they get across. For a time they hided under cabbages and beets in vagons. But the Germans soon find out, for they have spies everywhere. My mother saw them drag a man out from a



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vagon and shoot him dead vithout question. Now they stab their bayonets into every vagon. You could not go so.

"But you could bribe the sentinels. Some of the sentinels vant money, food, drink. They will let you pass, I think, if you have money."

"I have that," said Dimny. "Where shall I go?"

"If you will permit me to be at your service," said young Reumont. His manner was as gallant as his costume was shabby.

When they reached the highroad they turned south, hoping to be overtaken by one of the great carts drawn by the huge Brabantine draft-horses. But all they saw were going northerly.

The sound of a motor-horn made them leap aside. A big car painted gray shot by. The passenger in the rear leaned out to stare at them—he reached forward and touched the driver; the car stopped at a distance and then came backing toward them. The passenger, standing up, stared at Dimny without qualm.

"Who is it?" Dimny murmured.

"A boche!" said Reumont. "A spy, no doubt. What does he vant vit us? Thank God ve are in Holland. The Germans are careful vit the Hollandais."

As the car approached, the passenger lifted his hat and said in English that would have been perfect if it had not been quite so perfect:

"Pardon me, Miss, but I guess that you are an American, are you not?"

Reumont saved her from answering by speaking coldly.

"*Monsieur se trompe. Mademoiselle n'est pas américaine.*"

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I guessed she was. You see, I am come from America, and I was about to offer the youngk lady to rite in the car. You are goingk to Belchium, yes?"

Dimny was tempted to accept the offer of this swift aid, but Reumont spoke with frigidity.

"*Mein Herr se trompe.*"

The stranger waited vainly for Dimny to speak; then he bowed, started, and stared as if he had met her some-



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where and just recalled her, glared as if he would impress her image on his memory, turned, dropped back into his seat, and growled at his chauffeur, and the car sped on. Dimny saw it dwindle in its own wake of dust with regret. She was already tired out.

"You think he was not to be trusted?" she asked.

"Did you theenk him American with his I guesses?"

"No, but I thought he might perhaps be a nice flying Dutchman."

"The Dutch do not make duels with broadswords," said Reumont. "Did you see the tip of his ear gone and the cut on his cheek?"

"Yes, that's so!"

"And the car all gray like a German military car. He is, I think, an *espion*. Wherever you go, beware of the Germans, and most of the friendly ones."

A little later there was a clatter of hoofs behind them, and a rumble of wheels. Reumont stopped the high-perched driver of a vegetable-wagon and asked for a lift. They went jouncing down the road for five long, loud miles. The noise was too great for conversation, and Reumont said nothing until they approached the frontier. Then they got down.

"This is so far I can go. I am sorry," he said. "But there is the frontier. See—it shines in the evening sun."

She saw a double fence of wire crossing the fields and disappearing at the horizon right and left.

"Those wires are full of electric death," said Reumont. "You see that?"

He pointed to what seemed to be an old suit of clothes hung carelessly across the line.

"That is the body of some poor man who tried to pass at night. Do not go near. Do not touch. It is to die."

"But how do I go through?"

He pointed to the opening in the wire where the road passed. There were two sentry-boxes, and farther back a small building. Pacing up and down at the gate were two sentinels—one in the Dutch uniform beneath the red, white, and blue flag of Holland, the other in the field gray of Germany.



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Reumont made sure that no one was in sight and told Dimny what to do and say.

He raised both her hands to his lips and kissed them and stood with bowed head while she went forward sadly, timidly. The Dutch sentinel stared at her impassively. The German called out to her, smartly:

"*Halt! wohin gehen Sie?*"

"*Nach Esschen,*" Dimny quavered. Reumont had told her that that was the name of the next village across the border.

"*Haben Sie Passierschein?*" the sentinel asked.

Dimny shook her head and tried to smile enticingly. The sentinel looked over his shoulder, then smiled in turn, twiddled his fingers and repeated, meaningly:

"*Sie haben kein Passierschein?*"

"*Aber ja wohl!*" said Dimny, and she held up a bit of paper money.

The sentinel grinned and was about to put forth his hand when from the small building a man stepped out. It was the man with the nicked ear.

Dimny retreated in a panic to where Reumont stood. They saw the man advance to the sentinel; they saw him speaking angrily, and he struck the sentinel in the face.

"I did guess he was a German officer," said Reumont. "One can tell him by his striking the soldier. It is no hope. Ve are sospect! Ve must try another vay."

Reumont told Dimny that there was an old Dutch *vrouw* who lived in a little hut and now and then smuggled people through. She gave the sentinels occasional cups of milk and slabs of cheese, and she always told them what a nuisance the Belgians were. So they were not suspicious of Vrouw Weenix.

They found her in her little ancient room with plates aligned on shelves like haloes for sale. The neatness was distressing.

From a rope on a pulley hung a kettle with a singing spout. She made tea from it as soon as Reumont had explained in Dutch what Dimny's errand was.

There was a good deal of Vrouw Weenix, but most of it was heart. Out of her poverty she fed a multitude as by



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some miracle. She dwelt in a sea of woe and she did her best to conquer it. She had just milked her equally generous cow, and she gave her guests two beakers of the warm white wine, still afroth.

She made what cheer she could for Dimny until the night had grown pitch dark, and then she got out her old lantern and lighted it, stuck her feet into her whitewashed wooden shoes and beckoned the girl to follow.

Reumont had explained the trick that had got many a poor wretch across the dead-line. Vrouw Weenix was an official of the "underground railroad" and postal system.

Dimny flitted after her in the shadow of her lantern, almost running to keep pace with the beldame's long strides. The patter of Dimny's little feet was lost in the click-clack of the old woman's sabots. For the Dutch sentinel Vrouw Weenix had a pleasant word, but when the German challenged her she paused and gave her name, and took from the pocket of her enormous skirt her pass.

She held her lantern up to the man's face, so that while seeming to help him to read her pass she should actually dazzle his eyes to the quick flight of Dimny over the line.

The ruse had succeeded again and again, and it would have prospered now had not a military car borne down upon them with headlights that illumined the scene like a meteor.

Dimny stopped short, revealed. The sentinel saw her instantly. Her surprise and her quick stop convinced him of her purpose to run past his guard. He darted toward her with bayonet forward as he shouted:

*"Halt! Hände hoch!"*

But she did not put up her hands. She whirled and ran back into the security of Holland, trying to escape the long arms of the search-light.

She paused behind a tree and saw that the sentinel held Vrouw Weenix prisoner. In answer to his cry, other soldiers came running from the guard-house. They seized the old woman and dragged her away.

Dimny stood shivering in remorseful terror. She felt it her duty to return and offer herself as a hostage. But as



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she stepped into the road she was caught and dragged back. Reumont's voice came down across her shoulder:

"Queeck, come avay!"

"No, I must go and save that poor old soul."

"How should you save? You make only another preesoner. You cannot help her. You harm her more. She tells a good lie and gets free, I am sure. Please to come."

She suffered herself to be led back along the road, weeping with pity for the poor soul whose crime had been a good deed. She did not know that the man with the nicked ear who had accosted her on the road, and had seen her try to bribe the sentinel, was in the car whose lights, like superhuman eyes, had found her out in the dark. From behind that screen of radiance he watched her and impressed her image on his mind for future reference.

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## CHAPTER XIX

THERE was nothing for Dimny to do now but get through the night somehow and let the morrow bring counsel for a new plan.

Seeing how tired she was, Reumont found a peasant and hired a cart to take them back to Rosendaal. He placed Dimny in charge of his mother and sister, and she spent the night on straw under a ragged coverlet.

She was glad and proud to share the universal wretchedness. Perhaps her mother and sister had fared less well than she.

Breakfast was not served to the *vluchtelingen*. No maid brought them coffee and toast and letters. There was no bath-tub—only a little water from a pail.

It wrung her heart to abandon these new friends. She longed for the wealth and the power of angels that she might wreak miracles of redemption and revenge. But she was a girl and alone.

She embraced and kissed the two women, and they promised to pray for her. Reumont escorted her to the big railroad station and helped her arrange to have her baggage sent back to Rotterdam.

Reumont was very knightly in his poverty. He kissed both her hands again when he bade her good-by again. Then he set out for the internment camp, through the rain that came icily down now upon the town, the tents, the roads, the fields.

The rain came down upon Dimny's cheeks from her eyes. Life was too much for her.

And so, like a little driven Belgian *vluchtelingetje*, she took up her bundle of woe and plodded on under the lash of necessity.

The train took her back to Rotterdam through floods



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of rain that made the passage almost submarine. She took a taxicab from the station to the American consulate, where Colonel Listoe was polite, regretful, but positive. He offered his services in setting on foot a search for her missing people, but he could promise her nothing except that the process would be slow and uncertain. He told her about the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and he gave her the address at 98 Haringvliet, called a taxicab for her, and told her to ask for Capt. J. F. Lucey, one of the Americans who had given up his business for the purpose of heaping up riches in heaven, and who had signalized his assumption of office as Rotterdam manager of the C. R. B. by stealing three shiploads of wheat and saving thousands of lives thereby.

When the owners finally turned up and demanded where their wheat was, he answered, "In the bellies of little Belgians."

His palace of industry was once the home of an old Dutch fleetmaster. From an upper window the Yankee fleetmaster could look down upon the river Maas, or Meuse, and the squadron of barges that carried salvation from famine along the waterways of Belgium.

The taxicab swung Dimny down a lane of dripping trees aligned along the lake-like canal of the Haringvliet, once busy with the herring-boats. She stepped out at No. 98 and entered the waiting-room, which had been a gorgeous dining-room a hundred and fifty years before.

The hall and the waiting-room were filled now with bargemen and with the bustling officers and clerks of the Commission. Dimny recognized American faces among the others, and she felt a little renewal of hope in her dreary soul. It was less easy to despair in this busy room with its tall mirrors, its landscaped panels, its florid ceiling, and its vast glowing ingle than out in the windy camp at Rosendaal.

And then, as if in answer to her prayer for a miracle, a young angel appeared at the door. At least, he looked like an angel to her. Seeing her, he stared with radiant eyes as if she looked like an angel to him.

"Mr. Winsor!" she gasped.



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"Dimny—Miss Parcot!" he cried, and rushed to her, jostling the Dutch barge captains aside like ninepins.

They clasped hands, gazed, lowered their eyes, and blushed in unison. Both were remembering that wild little note of love that he had sent to her. Both were hearing anew its echoes in their hearts.

In moments of extraordinary experience people usually say commonplace things. Dimny's best at this marvelous moment was to exclaim:

"What a coincidence!"

Noll blushed a little deeper. Coincidences are things that lovers manufacture.

"You can call it that if you want to," he said, "but if you could know how I've hoped to find you!"

She told him a little of what she had gone through and of her hopelessness of getting into Belgium. He struck her with a very pleasant lightning when he said:

"Why, I'll take you in myself."

"But they tell me my passport is useless."

"Of course it is. It's only an American Government passport. I'll get you a passport of the C. R. B. That will take you where nothing else will."

"You'll get me into Belgium?" Dimny cried.

"Surest thing you know! Of course, they'll arrest you every few minutes, and they'll search you to the skin—as the saying is; and they may shoot you, but I'll take you in, if you'll go with me. I'll take you in in my own car, for I've just been made the courier of the C. R. B."

He knew even better than she what dangers, what insults, what hatreds lay in wait for them; but if only they could face them together, it was enough for him.

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## CHAPTER XX

IN the rush of their first greeting Noll and Dimny, like young devourers of romance, skipped to the last chapter before they took up the first. She had told him of how her passport had failed to get her into Belgium, and he had promised that he would accomplish for her what Uncle Sam had failed to do, all before she thought to ask him how and why he had come to Rotterdam.

The swift, deep look he gave into her eyes answered for him so well that she blushed fiercely, then whitened, then looked away. And that frightened him past confessing that he had followed her on the simple, sufficient impulse of an infatuated lover who could not bear to let his chosen one out of his life. If she escaped from it, he must pick up his life, pursue her, and cast it about her again.

He could not proclaim this world-old reason-beyond-reason, in the face of Dimny's alarm nor in the midst of that crowded room where petitioners and providers came and went. He gave instead his secondary reason.

"Oh, I was sick of loafing in Carthage while so much was going on, and I thought I'd have to take a peek at the big show."

He did not admit that he hoped to achieve something for the victims of Germany that might atone somewhat for the German blood in his own veins. He had come to regard it as a vicious principle in his system, an inherited disease. America was full of Germans whose dominant loyalty to the Vaterland was not smothered, but wakened to new life, by the atrocities of the army, and whose loyalty grew with the exercise of defending Germany from the rest of the world. And if the rest of the world has swung to excessive and cruel extremes of hostility toward the German people, who gave it the push unless it was the German people?



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But Noll did not mention the German half of his ancestry to Dimny. He told her of his zest for travel, and the thrill of his first sea voyage and his first vision of the Statue of Liberty as his ship marched past her, down the Bay.

"She didn't seem to be welcoming the oppressed from other nations to America, as they always say. When we had passed, I looked back and Old Lady Liberty looked like a mother standing at a home door and holding a lamp out into the dark to help her son from stumbling as he went away. When I left my mother with her sister in the small town where she lived, and walked to the station, that's just what my mother did. She looked mighty solemn, and so did Liberty. Liberty is a pretty solemn thing to get and to keep, isn't it?

"I wanted to get into the thick of it in Belgium, but I found out, just as you did, that an American passport was no use. The consul referred me to the Commission for Relief in Belgium as the only way to get in, so I came over to this office. Captain Lucey set me to work on the spot, and what do you suppose was my first fearless task in this neck of woods?"

"I can't imagine," said Dimny.

"Taking Christmas cards out of Christmas presents."

"I don't understand," said Dimny.

"Who could?" said Noll. "But you've heard of the Christmas ship?"

"Something—not much."

"Well, our dear United States was so stirred up by the atrocities in Belgium that she sent over two war-ships; one of them, the *Tennessee*, brought over money to pay the board bills of stranded Americans and take back those who hadn't the fare home; and the other, the collier *Jason*, came over loaded with Christmas presents from American children to Belgian children.

"The American pacifists, you know, keep insisting that if America is very careful not to raise an army or sell any ammunition to itself or anybody else, and speaks awfully gently to the Germans, they will soon lay down their arms and cry and feel sorry and ask everybody to kiss and make up and let bygones be bygones.



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"So one of the first things they did was to see that the Christmas ship should carry a big cargo of presents for little German children, too, so that every *Hänsel und Gretel* should ask *Vater und Mutter* not to be cross any longer, and the tender-hearted Germans were so touched in their well-known *Gemüthlichkeit* that they ordered every Christmas present from an American child to a Belgian child to be searched, and if there was a card or a message in it, it had to be taken out.

"This meant no end of work for the foolish Americans, and it meant that the Belgian children would not get their presents in time for Christmas, but a lot that worried the Germans. They wouldn't harm a child for worlds. If a little Belgian brat wanted to get out and wander along the roads while they burned its home and shot its papa and mamma, why, they didn't mind. But of course they had to protect their poor little German army from the dangerous messages American children would be sure to put into the packages. So they ordered Captain Lucey to order every line of writing taken out.

"So he ordered it. He does nearly everything they say, because, if he doesn't, then a heap of babies are going to die and no end of mothers will starve or go mad at watching their children shrivel up and perish.

"But I'm afraid we left some of the messages in. And when we promised to take out all the messages, we didn't promise not to put any back in.

"There's quite a crowd of us here, a lot of Rhodes scholars, fine young fellows, all of us working for nothing, of course—a little allowance for expenses, but that's all. It's costing the big men, Lucey, and Hoover, and the others, fortunes, and they're spending millions of dollars, but they're saving millions of lives.

"It's horrible that such suffering has to be, but it's glorious to be doing something to keep it down, and that's what I'm here for. But you haven't told me what brought you to Rotterdam, or why you want to get to Belgium, or what you'd do if you got in?"

Noll knew perfectly well what her mission was, yet he felt that she did not know he knew, and did not want him



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to know. In order to put her at ease, he asked with all his available innocence; and though he knew how secret her reason was, yet he was wounded and repulsed when she sheltered her secret with an evasive answer:

"Why, I—I was in England, and a Mrs. Curfey and some other people asked me to find their daughters. Nearly a hundred poor girls who were in convents there have never been heard from and their mothers are half-mad with suspense."

"I see," said Noll. But he was still craven with the guilt of forbidden knowledge, and something impelled him to ask:

"But your own mother and sister—did you find them in England all right? And were they well?"

And then Dimny caught her breath with a sudden heart-ache and she was too shaken to manage a further evasion. She sighed.

"My mother and sister are in Belgium, too."

"Really? Where?" said Noll.

"I don't know. I've got to find them."

"If I could be of any help, now—"

"Oh, you could, I'm sure. I don't know anybody else who could. I haven't a friend on earth."

"Oh yes, you have," Noll insisted. "You've got two—me and the C. R. B. We've got even Germany scared, for if the C. R. B. drops out all Belgium will starve. And Germany doesn't want that. At first she didn't care. She thought she could frighten the world to death by saying, 'Boom!' But she's beginning to know better. She's having a hard enough time feeding her armies and her people. And she stole all the food in Belgium—and every cow. There were a million bushels of wheat stored up in Antwerp. She took it all. She sold five thousand bushels of it the other day to the C. R. B. Think of it. American charity gold had to be spent to buy back from Germany for the Belgians the wheat she stole from the Belgians. But the Americans spent it. And now our people don't get arrested more than a dozen times a day, and they're always released, and our passport is recognized where no other is."



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"Could I get one of your passports, do you suppose?" Dimny pleaded.

"I'll see. Perhaps Captain Lucey can arrange it. I'll speak to him."

He went up-stairs to the office. He had to wait till two delegations from starving towns had arranged for the shipment of barge-loads of food.

Noll told Captain Lucey in confidence just what he knew of Dimny and of her search for her mother and sister, and begged him to help her to believe that her secret was unknown.

The captain promised, and Noll went to fetch Dimny. She gained a new confidence when she was introduced to this man who had saved nearly as many lives as the Kaiser had taken; who managed a great fleet of ships and a squadron of barges and operated an automobile-factory to make trucks for the distribution, and poured wheat and condensed-milk cans into Belgium nearly as fast as the Kaiser hurled bullets and grenades into France.

Dimny took his big hand, and looked up into his high-up eyes, and explained her purpose to get into Belgium and find those missing girls. The captain answered:

"That trip hasn't been made by a woman yet."

"I don't mind."

"The Imperial Government, for which we have the greatest respect—ahem!—will make a whale of a row. But we'll—we'll take a chance, if you'll be very careful."

"Oh, I will!" cried Dimny. She seized Captain Lucey's hand in both of hers and wrung it, wailing, "I can't begin to thank you."

"Don't begin," he mumbled, shyly. "Wait till you've finished, then you may not want to thank us."

While Dimny's passports were being arranged for, Captain Lucey was explaining many things to Noll, who was to carry opened mail through the lines to Brussels. He told Noll to expect a mysterious passenger to join him at Dordrecht. The C. R. B. had made such vigorous protest against the insolent mistreatment of its officers and messengers by the military that a former officer was going



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to look into the matter and he would ride on Noll's car in citizen's clothes.

Noll groaned with rage. He had counted on a long and pleasantly adventurous ride with Dimny. Now he was to have a chaperon. Three was a crowd at best, but when the third was a German he became a mob.

Yet at least he was where he wanted to be. He felt in his little motor-car like a young knight with his lady on the pillion clinging to him; and they rode into the forest against ogres and dragons of black fame.

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## CHAPTER XXI

LONG before, while Dimny was still practising her songs in California, sending her young voice lilting through the florid *vocalises* of her Italian master, and schooling her fingers at the piano under the gentle tempers of her old German professor, her mother and sister had been caught and crushed by that other Germany from which the professor and millions of his kind had fled to American freedom.

Shortly after Alice s letter was started on its slow voyage to Dimny the German commandant at Dofnay had been driven from the town by a Belgian counter-attack and from a distance had bombarded the place. A shell had crashed through the roof of the convent, slaying a few of the nuns in their little beds and hurling the walls of their strait cells in upon their mangled bodies.

After the first incursion of German beastliness the old Mother Superior had called her flock together and bidden the victims to pray for their oppressors, to ask Heaven to forgive them, since they knew not what they did. Later she had prayed Heaven to show her a pathway of release for her tortured fold. The only answer she had received had come from the German cannon.

There was nothing to do but leave the ruined home and take to the fields, for the Germans in the reconquest of the town took a revenge for their ignominious retreat in a more ignominious destruction.

The roads were full of battle. German patrols clashed with Belgian. Skirmishers chose any shelter and fought across any field. The flock of nuns was scattered in the night, and Dimny's mother and her sister Alice, creeping forth from a barn one morning, could find no trace of their late companions.



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They fled from the sound of the cannon and the sight of the flames. But the margin of war followed them like a tide, heading them off now here, now there, driving them hither and yon till they were far from Dofnay and quite lost in a whirlpool of fugitives flooding a crowded road.

On that road a dog harnessed to a wheelbarrow turned as he tugged and stared back at the old woman in wooden shoes who stumbled haggardly after. She carried the handles of the barrow; it was heavily loaded with a box tied up in rope, a heap of sacks, and sprawled across them a little girl asleep, rocked asleep in her terror, her hunger, and her tears by the swaying of that rolling cradle. The dog looked back wonderingly at his mistress and found that she was turning to stare at the burning village where she had left her husband and her son slain, her daughter's husband and her daughter dead. Her eyes were as full of wonder as the dog's. She did not weep for sorrow, or even for weariness.

Her home was gone, the gardens destroyed — those gardens built indeed with hands, since all the soil was brought there in carts and spread on the barren sand spadeful by spadeful.

The wheelbarrow contained all her worldly goods, a few clothes, a little bread and vegetables, and a granddaughter. The next village was a long way off and she did not know any one there. She had never been there. It was her Carcassonne, always to be visited, but never reached.

She would get to town now, if the Germans did not get there ahead of her. The famous church, whose towers she had just been able to see when her eyes were young, would not be there unless she hurried. In the wonderful market-square she would find, if she were laggard, the burgomaster and many of the leading merchants. They would be standing with their hands held high or tied behind their backs. If she were very laggard she might watch them shot down, falling in heaps, while the village wives, whom once she had envied because they lived in her Carcassonne, would be wringing their hands and asking the heavens why they had let this doom fall upon the pretty



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town. If she were a little later she would find the living men and the women digging ditches to bury their dead in.

By the roadside the American women dropped on a pile of stones. They did not look at each other, nor did they seem to see the throng of fugitives straggling past them. Only a few of the fugitives noted them, and they stared a moment only, for these two women had not the look of peasant villagers.

Numberless lost dogs were running here and there, hunting their masters; one of them, a big Belgian hound, approached Alice and her mother. He knew that they were strange; they were not even Belgian. They were too dejected and benumbed even to speak to a lost dog.

A herd of children straggled forward, all dressed alike, all fagged out. They were fugitives from an orphanage that had been struck by a shell.

On a wheelbarrow lay an old nun, ninety years old. A younger nun trundled the wheelbarrow with heavy steps.

A madly terrified child, a little girl with hair flying and eyes wide, darted here and there like a lost dog, seeking her parents and fleeing in terror from all the outstretched hands of pity.

A wain lumbered along, drawn by oxen, and loaded with men and women and their hasty baggage. A knife-grinder, a *schaarsliep*, went past, lugging his little machine-shop with him, but he did not cry his trade.

Men, boys, girls, glided past on bicycles.

A platoon of young girls from a select school marched past as if out for a walk. They were the daughters of officers. They had for shepherdess a *grande dame* of great dignity. They carried bundles and were very tired, but they were the daughters of officers; they marched.

A young woman with a pack strapped to her back trudged doggedly, linking hands with a bevy of her children. A heavy woman with a babe suckling rode sidewise on a white donkey led by her husband. They might have been the Holy Family on their way to Egypt to escape this new Herod who was slaughtering so many innocents. The woman had what the Germans call the *Marienheft*—the Holy Mary face.



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An old man plodded alongside an old slaver-lipped horse. A dog was tied to the shafts. In the two-wheeled cart mattresses and clothes were piled, and on top of them four little children journeyed. They would have enjoyed the voyage, if they had known where their father and mother had gone. The old man was a neighbor only.

Three dogs harnessed in troika fashion pulled a cart on which a woman lay. Her husband walked alongside the dogs. These people were lucky. Husband and wife and children were well, and there would soon be another child. Forty thousand new children would enter the Belgian world shortly after the Germans had taken all the cows and most of the food for mothers.

Priests of various frocks mingled with the current. Some of them read their breviaries, some read this living book of Exodus. Some led their parish flocks, and carried the burdens of the old. Some of them had been kicked and prodded with bayonets, trampled and jeered. They had a Master who set them the example of how to bear Gethsemanes. They had seen their monasteries rifled, convents shelled, churches used for stables or prison-pens, altar-cloths defiled and reverend vessels choked with filth. They wondered where God was all this while. Their hearts were murmurous with *lama sabachthani*.

A curious noise was heard above the shuffle of feet and the slap of horses' hoofs. It was like laughter, and yet very unlike. The Parcots looked up the road. A muttering and giggling troop came, with strange gestures, strange gait, strange outcries. These had been released from an insane-asylum that had come under fire. Their keepers tried to hold them in line and darted here and there like collies, to thrust back any one who tried to escape.

And so they passed. In a mad world they seemed less mad than before. And so they passed.

The two women named Parcot regarded them calmly. They had seen so many strange things that the faculty of amazement was exhausted. It all seemed quite natural. For days they had seen the same sort of thing. It was not a panic flight, but rather a slow, steady migration from one despair to another. The people carried their bundles



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and valises till they grew tired, and let them fall for other wanderers to stumble over but not to pick up. What was the use? Where was there to go? The movement was what the cattlemen of the West call a drift. There was no stampede, merely a slow, aimless, hopeless lava-flow.

The Parcots had worn their high heels down and the thin soles through. They were covered with dust. They were so used to this pilgrimage that they rather wondered if it were not merely a dream that there were countries where soldiers did not burn villages and villagers did not become bedouin.

A man carrying a baby sank down at their side with exhaustion, spilling the baby on the ground. His arm ached insufferably. The baby had ridden on it for hours. The baby found ever so many attractive things in the rubbish. It did not need much to amuse it. It chattered, held up a pebble to its father. It did not know that its mother was lost. Its laughter was like the voice of Flecker's "linnet that had lost her way and sang on a blackened bough in hell."

A lone woman with the eyes of an overdriven heifer, hearing the laughter, laughed in a mocking echo. She turned out of the stream and sat down on the ground by the side of the baby to hear it gurgle and watch its fat little hands and sprawling fingers finding diamonds and pearls in the dirt. The busy baby did not notice the woman, and she did not disturb its industrious preoccupation, but she turned to the two Parcots.

"*Ah, ces p'tites choses! Moi, j'en avais un, comme ça, là-bas.*"

The younger woman, Alice, mumbled, drearily, "*Vraiment?*"

She turned to her mother and translated: "She says that she had a baby like that—back there—"

"Where is it now?" said Mrs. Parcot. "Lost?"

"I'll ask her. *Votre bébé, madame, où se trouve-t-il maintenant? J'espère qu'il n'est pas perdu.*"

"*Pas perdu—pas perdu—mais—mais il est brûlé vif!*"

Alice recoiled.



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Her mother demanded, "What does she say?"
"It was burned up."

The poor orphan—what else is a mother who has lost her only child?—seemed to want to talk to somebody. In a voice without horror, the dull voice of lassitude under agony, she told her story so slowly and drearily that Alice could make mumbled translations of it to her mother.

"I am Madame Valckenaers, *veuve du feu* Pierre Valckenaers, soldier of the King. He was wounded, you know, in the fight for Liége. He was brought back in a cart. They put him in the Hospital of St. Damien in our village. He was in uniform; our monks were caring for him. I took my baby to see him, to make him smile. Then the Germans came into the hospital. They struck the monks. They laughed at the soldiers. They tore the bandages off to make sure of the wounds, and left them to bleed. I struggled to protect my poor man. A soldier struck at me with his bayonet. My little baby was stabbed in his poor fat legs. I ran home and I was shot by the bullets flying through the streets—just a little scratch here on the shoulder. I tied up the wounds of my poor baby. Then I heard people marching. I looked out. I saw German soldiers leading prisoners. My husband was with them, staggering, bleeding.

"I left my baby in the house and ran to beg for my husband's life. The soldiers pushed me away, knocked me in the gutter. They marched to the banks of the little river. They made our poor people stand there. Then they shot them dead. The body of my husband they threw into the river. They would not let me go near him even then.

"I turned back to my home. I saw everywhere fire. I ran, ran. The soldiers were dragging from the houses wine and food and pretty things. Then they set fire with oil and torches. When I reached my home it was all one blaze. From inside I heard my baby crying—crying: '*Maman! Maman!*' Our big dog is there; he howls and barks. I try to break in. A soldier, drunk now, strikes me in the face. I try again, screaming, 'My baby! My



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baby!' He cries, '*Maman! Maman!* I burn!' The Germans drive me away again. No more sound but the flames. The roof falls in.

"I hear my baby crying always. In the night, asleep, I reach for my baby. My breast feels his lips. I wake. He is not there, only heartache. I hear him cry. I see flames. . . . I hear our dog barking. Then the roof falls. The flames jump high."

She said it quietly, with a lethargy more terrible than frenzy. Her soul had frayed itself out with suffering.

Alice bowed her head and, reaching for the woman's hand, wrung it bitterly. The young mother smiled and said again:

"*Toujours j'entends sa voix: 'Maman! Maman!' J'entends toujours aboyer notre pauvre chien.*"

From such innocence fagged out with unearned punishment the women turned their eyes away. But as far as they could reach they saw other wretches, each with his curse upon his innocence.

It was hard to believe what they saw and knew, that this horde of wanderers was a people that had done Germany no harm further than to defend its honor against the infamous demand of a nation that had guaranteed its integrity. It was hard to believe that this was the real world, that the invaders claimed it a Holy War with God as Ally.

The baby playing at their feet grew hungry. It began to cry: "*Maman! Maman!*" The father tried to hush the child. The cry tore open his own wounds, but he had no food to give it.

The baby clamored on. Young Madame Valckenaers gathered the tiny starveling up into her lap and tried to divert it by cuddling and rocking it and tossing it in the air. At length she yielded to its importunities. The Belgian mothers make no secret of that beautiful rite. The childless mother took the motherless child to her breast aching with plenty, and gave relief from hunger in gaining respite from anguish. Nature did not know that her own baby was dead.

The baby fell asleep in the foster-mother's arms.

Dimny's mother and sister rose, whispered her their



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farewells, and took up their march again. As they walked men and women hailed them and offered rides in their cars or carts. But the Parcots shook their heads.

On their first day's march they had accepted several of these invitations, had clambered into motors or wagons, only to clamber out again to offer their places to women older and still more unfortunate than they.

The Parcots had no plan. They moved by a dull instinct because everybody else moved. They did not bemoan their fate, because so many others had the same fate or worse. This did not make their lot easy, but it made it normal, usual, natural.

They knew little except that they did not want to meet any one they knew. To go northerly implied England; eastward lay Germany; westward more of helpless Belgium. If they could reach France they could hide themselves in some village.

They walked slowly, buying food when they could, accepting charity when it was proffered. And eventually they reached Louvain. They came in by the Aerschot road, past Kessel-Loo into the Boulevard de Diest to Station Square and up the Rue de la Station.

The name of the town did not mean much to them then. It had been almost forgotten by the world, till the Kaiser chose to make it one of his martyr cities.

It seemed like heaven to the Parcots to find a town with the equipment of civilization. They went to the Hôtel de Suède, and had a comfortable room and hot baths and meals. They had known what it was to gnaw roots, raw beets, dirty crusts, and to drink from muddy pools. They could hardly believe that such a luxury as cleanliness had ever been invented. Mrs. Parcot had brought to Europe abundant funds, but money had been of little use. Now she and her daughter went to the shops and bought themselves clothes, shoes, hats. They resolved to rest at Louvain a long while.

But living at the hotel was not pleasant for them in the unceasing chaos, and they sought quieter lodgings. Rather for hospitality than for money they were taken into the home of Professor Tudesq of the university.



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The Parcots saw little of Professor Tudesq. He was trying to complete a manuscript before the Germans arrived—a descriptive catalogue of the eight hundred books of which no other copy existed in the world. His wife and daughters were full of thoughtfulness for their guests. Their sons were with the Belgian troops. The eldest daughter, Philomène, had a sweetheart somewhere in the trenches. She was very solemn; but the little girl, Philothée, was a spirit of mischief and brought smiles to faces that had lost the art, the hope, the desire of smiling.

Mrs. Parcot had told her that she was an American, and the child had a myriad questions to ask which Alice had to translate.

At the table Philothée told her father what she had gleaned of America, and he brought out a volume of views. He found a picture of an American flag and Philothée learned to recognize it among the other emblems of nations. Alice taught her the American name of it. The best she could make of it was, "De stairs ant strah-eep." They laughed and wept to hear her piping voice struggling with "De stair-spengle bennair."

"Oh, seh, cane zhoo see bah-ee te town zairlee lah-eet?"

The professor had heard that all America had risen in wrath to protest the outrage of Belgium, and that warships had landed marines who had joined the British and French. He assured his family that Louvain would see them any day.

Troops came indeed, but they were German. The horror of their approach had so chilled the air that the burgomaster had ordered the populace to surrender all arms. Even razors and old wall ornaments were turned in. The professor gave up his paper-knife.

On the 19th of August the Germans came in with voices chanting, banners flying, and fifes and drums curdling the air. The people did not hail the supermen as a host of deliverance or of mercy, but they were meek. They knew too well that the least resistance meant destruction.

The Germans had proclaimed their willingness to punish all for the act of any. Alice Parcot and her mother slept ill that night, shivering with nightmares, repeating their



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old torments in new instances. There was no safety in flight and there was no place to flee. There was one hope only, that in the obscure home of this old scholar they might hide unseen.

The noise of the soldiers irritated Professor Tudesq because it prevented the concentration of his mind on the catalogue at which he wrote in vain, like another Archimedes fretting at his task while the city fell. He had not written long when there was a sharp rapping at the door, then the thud of rifle-butts.

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## CHAPTER XXII

ALICE PARCOT had been helping to carry food and bedding into the cellar against a siege and bombardment, for it was reported that the French were about to attack the Germans. She was just going up the stairs when the door was thrown open and an officer with a guard of two soldiers burst in.

Professor Tudesq appeared below, emerging from his study in a rage at the noise. The officer's answer to the protestations of the old man was to inform him that his house had been selected for the billeting of twenty soldiers and two officers.

Tudesq denounced the outrage and said that his house had room for no more than were there. The officer explained that the soldiers could sleep on the floor. He and the other officers would require bedrooms, and good ones. Where the family slept was not his concern.

He pushed his way into the study and approved it. He swept books and manuscripts from the chairs and the tables and from an old couch, and ordered his men to clear out the rubbish.

This was Tudesq's holy of holies, and he resisted with a frenzy that the soldiers found ridiculous. Knowing something of how to wound scholars, from being the son of a professor who was now belying all his scholarship in pamphlets of insane patriotism, Oberleutnant Kranzler caught up the sacred manuscript he found on the desk and ripped it in two, then across again and flung it into the air.

Old Tudesq, seeing his years of labor annihilated, leaped at him with a senile whimper, but Kranzler cuffed him away. Madame Tudesq and her daughters ran into the



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room, screaming. They were turned out with fists and boots. Then the old man was flung into the hall.

Oberleutnant Kranzler drew his revolver and made the rounds of the house. He found Mrs. Parcot and Alice in their room and chose that for himself. He murmured to Alice that she might share it with him.

When he had finished his survey he sought out Tudesq again.

Kranzler warned him tnat if anything went wrong, everything would "go to smash." (*"Wenn es nicht gut geht, alles kaput!"*) *Kaput* was the favorite word of the day. Then he marched into the street. German *Kultur* had reached the ancient university town and was about to civilize it.

A little later an orderly brought Kranzler's baggage and a score of soldiers established themselves on the lower floor of the house. That night Kranzler was too drunk to confirm the terrors he had inspired. His soldiers and brother officers made merry on confiscated wine, as any pirate crew. They had had orders to move on to the battle front the next day and they were rehearsing for what they would do to Paris on their arrival. They were coming as the avenging angels of the Lord to punish that vile and wicked city.

They left the Tudesq house in a loathsome state; bottles, cigar stumps, broken chairs, wrecked heirlooms, and filth were everywhere. Also, with the astonishing sense of coprophilous humor, that marked their sojourn in churches, châteaux, and homesteads, they had in a spirit of careful irony played jokes with ordure. The beast can be traced by its spoor.

Other troops came up. Other officers and soldiers were quartered on the town and on the Tudesq ménage. But now once more the Parcots were to learn that nothing human is perfect, not even German efficiency.

For one of the unbidden guests was a Captain Rippmann, who apologized for troubling his hosts, and kept his soldiers in order and sobriety, to their intense disgust. Other officers went so far as to have a soldier or two executed for the mere offense of rape. Rippmann was dis-



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gusted by what a German eulogist had praised as "the spirit that streamed out of the German folk-soul shaken to its depths."

Rippmann tried to make friends with Philothée, but she feared him utterly. She had seen many children maltreated and she had seen her father insulted and mauled. Whenever Rippmann spoke to her she put up her hands and trembled.

Rippmann's smile was to her what the wolf's was to Red Riding-Hood. But he had children of his own at home in East Prussia and he feared what the Russian hordes might do to them. He seemed to feel that he could ward off danger from them by a vicarious kindness.

He tried to tell Philothée of his own babies. He pleaded with her: "*Bitte, Kindchen, sei nicht unartige! Foulez-fous fenir à moy, mon ongfong? Che suis père d'une petite feel yoost comme fous.*"

He tried to bribe her with sweets, but she shivered and thrust her hands higher till he cried in anguish:

"*Ach Gott, lass doch! Fürchte nichts!*"

But she did not, or could not, understand.

He ran to her, pressed down her uplifted little hands, knelt by her side to implore her friendship. She fell in a faint across his arm.

That same day Professor Tudesq was carried off as a hostage after the usual, infinitely repeated scenes of struggle with frantic women and children, the monotonous bruising and slashing of gentle bodies, the torment of breaking hearts.

The children of the town were taught at their parents' knees to fear the field-gray uniform and offer it every reverence. But their little hearts boiled with primeval impudence, and resentment filled them for what their parents had accepted.

When the German backs were turned, even Philothée forgot her terror and made faces at them. Sometimes she just had to shout names at them from concealment. She had two languages to choose from. Alice heard her once shrieking from the window at a passing troop, whose fife-music drowned her own:



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"*Leeliken, vuile, smeerige Duytschkoppen!*"

Alice snatched her backward and asked her what such wild words might mean. She translated them into French as: "Ugly, dirty, filthy, German pates!" She begged Alice to teach her what they would be in American, so that she could call them those, too.

Alice gasped, "Where do you hear such words?" and commanded her never to use them again, lest she endanger the whole family.

Philothée promised, and kept her promise in the letter, if not the spirit. She had been an irreconcilable from her cradle days, and, having forsworn childish profanity, she had to think up some other weapon of protest.

The children of Louvain, like other children, used to celebrate certain festivals with *kalotjes*, tiny torpedoes, little crackers, to scare people with. Philothée acquired a supply somehow, and one day, seeing a squad of *Duytschkoppen* marching down the street of the Joyeuses-Entrées, she flung a handful of these from the window and ducked her head.

The Germans were in such a state of nerves from the expectation of *francs-tireurs*, and from the stories of Belgian savagery, that these sharp little explosions under their very feet startled the patrol into a ludicrous panic. Every man Hans of them dropped to the ground and looked about for the *franc-tireur* who had trained a machine-gun at them from some church tower. They studied the roofs and the façades; only one window was open.

The *Unteroffizier* gave the command to fire a volley through it. The broken glass fell about Philothée's lowered head without damage to her. The bullets splashed and crashed. One of them broke a mirror in Captain Rippmann's room.

Captain Rippmann was in the room. He ran downstairs and met the soldiers at the door. They explained the attack. He searched the rooms and found Philothée cowering behind the window with more ammunition. She was laughing like a pixie. He laughed, too, as he confiscated her store.

He showed the soldiers the *Spielzeug* that had frightened



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them, and they moved on, loving the Belgians no better, sullen with humiliation.

The explosion of a motor tire was enough to throw them into the position of defense. The tension increased. The French were reported advancing.

On another day spy-hunters, who had been warned of the presence of two strange women in the house, came knocking at the door and demanding information as to the guests.

While they questioned Madame Tudesq and her elder daughter, Philomène, the little Philothée stole up the stairs and warned Alice and her mother of the visitors. This gave them time, unfortunately, to consider, and in their panic they decided that they would give false names, lest word of them be sent to the American embassy, from which they wished to hide. They selected at random the name of Mrs. Parcot's family, Judson.

A brisk rap at the door barely preceded the entrance of the German officer, a tall, keen man, whose fierce eyes defied the shame he felt. He could never forget that he had once reached the height of a lieutenant-colonelcy before his gambling debts had broken him and caused his shift from the cavalry to the infantry and finally to the spy-bureau. His wife had divorced him and taken his children. He was fierce against the world.

His subordin tes gave him his courtesy title of Oberst-leutnant Klemm, but he suffered hells of wrath at being out of command at such a time. He had a grievance against his own soul, against his superiors, and against everybody. He cursed his gambler heart in secret. He could not inveigh against his superiors, therefore his underlings and foreigners bore the brunt of his manifold grudges.

He was not destined for the honorable wounds of war; even the scar upon his face was the memorial of nothing more than a student duel that had cost him the tip of his left ear and a seam across his cheek.

He stared at the women in surprise. Madame Tudesq had disclaimed all knowledge of them except that their name was Parcot and they had come as refugees. The name had led him to expect French or Belgian women. He



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saw at a glance, in spite of their Louvain-bought clothes, that they were Anglo-Saxon.

"*Engländerinnen?*" he demanded.

"*Amerikanerinnen,*" said Alice, who knew a little German.

"*Alles gleich!*" Klemm sneered. "*Wie heissen Sie?*"

"Judson."

"Yootzohn! *Das heisse ich lügen!*"

Alice did not know that he gave her the lie. She mumbled, "*Bitte?*"

He broke out in English, "You say your name is Yootzohn?"

"Judson, yes."

"Chutson. *Warum*—w'y den—then!—dit Madame Dutesq say your name is Parcot?"

Helplessness caught in a clumsy effort at deceit makes a sorry showing. Alice and her mother flushed, blenched, glanced at each other, and said nothing.

It was the best answer, for Klemm was flattered by his own success and mollified a little.

He asked for their papers, passports, letters of identification. They had nothing. They explained that they had lost in the burning of the convent at Dofnay everything but what they had worn in their flight, and they had worn that out.

His voice gradually ceased to snarl; he roared more and more gently. His eyes lost the flame of hatred, and, understanding how resourceless Alice was, he found her more and more attractive.

He had been absent from those famous pillages; he had been late to the sacking of towns and cities. He had not captured even a piano for his Berlin quarters. But here was an undiscovered treasure. Why should he not accept this perquisite?

He turned to his assistants and bade them search the room and question Madame Parcot or Judson or whoever *zum Teufel* she was. He said he wished to question the daughter separately and then compare the answers of the two women.

The under-officers could hardly hide their grins behind their salutes.



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Klemm motioned Alice to follow him and led her into the next room with a martial frown that he doffed for his most winning smile as soon as he had closed the door upon her.

"Sit yourself town, pleass," he said, bringing forward a chair, "and not to be afrait of me, please. I have been in America much. I love America. I would be frients vit all American laties, especial so pretty ones as you.

"Dis—this—I have almost forgotten how to speak that *verflucht tey-ha*— This Louvain is a bat place for a foreigner like you laties. Any moment now comes the crash. It would be goot for you to have a nize frient. But you must geeve to me your frientship—and confidence, *nicht wahr?*"

Alice looked at him, and looked away. He did not inspire confidence. She had no confidence left for anybody or anything in the world or out of it.

"Feerst," he went on, "for why you are here and not to seek your American consul?"

She did not answer.

"Ve—we Chermans inseest to know who goes where and why. Always man must make his registeringk by the *Polizei*. In enemy country like this where the Belgian cannibals make such treachery by us, the more reason we must know, *versteht sich!*

"I can be very bat for you and your nize moot'er. But if you goingk to be frients by me—"

He reached down and took her hand. She did not struggle. He clasped his other hand over it. She closed her eyes and sighed in utter resignation. In unconscious mockery, he closed his eyes and sighed in utter satisfaction.

He drew her nearer, bent and clipped her in his arms, and lifted her to his breast with ruthless force.

He laughed at the sight of her sweet face under his eyes. He paused to gloat over her white, meek beauty. His whole being rocked with delight and he cried out an old poem of Geibel's:

*"Nun lasset die Glocken von Turm zu Turm*
*Durchs Land frohlocken im Jubelsturm."*



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"You understant me? My heart is full of bells ringkink in storms of choy. You shall love me, Mees Parcot—Yootzohn or whoever. Say, you goingk love me. You don't make answer. You are afrait yet. So youngk you are. Am I the feerst who holds you? Say I am even if I am not it. Tell me I am the feerst. You don't say! Yet I am the feerst Cherman. Dat I do know—I can tell. Say it and geeve me de feerst *Küsslein auf Deutsch.*"

She shook her head and murmured with a ghastly smile in which there was a kind of hideous triumph of degradation:

"You are not the first, nor the twentieth. I was at Dofnay when the Thuringians were there, and then, after they left, another regiment came to Dofnay. You are too late. That is why we do not go to America, my mother and I."

He stared at her and understood. He stared as if she had the plague and he had touched her and could not let her go. The door opened and Captain Rippmann walked in. It was his room.

Klemm's muscles returned the captain's salute and freed him from Alice. She dropped back into the chair he had placed for her and fell to giggling.

Klemm thought that she had played a trick. He could have struck her with his fist, but Rippmann was standing there awaiting an answer to his sarcastic apology for "intruding" in his own room.

Klemm explained only that he was on a visit of inquiry. Rippmann's smile was icy with discredit, and Klemm took his leave, called his men from Mrs. Parcot's room, and left the house.

Outside in the street he paused; one of his assistants ventured to ask if he cared to compare the answers they had received from the Frau with the answers he had received from the Fräulein.

Klemm ordered him to "halt his muzzle" and moved on, but he stumbled because he looked over his left shoulder as he went down the Rue des Joyeuses-Entrées. He wanted to turn back. He vowed that he would go back, soon, alone.

Alice, seeing him gone, rose and went to her room without



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explaining. She was laughing a soft laugh that made Rippmann's blood run chill. When she reached her mother's arms her laughter made that little infinite change to weeping.

Perhaps it was on that very day that Dimny, in Los Angeles, waiting for her singing-lesson was saying to another girl, "It's funny, mother's not sending word that she has sailed." She pouted about it. "She and Alice are having such an exciting time in London, I suppose, that they never think of me."

Her friend's comment was, "It must be gorgeous to be over there so close to the war."

"Gorgeous!" Dimny groaned. "Wouldn't it be just my luck to be out of it!"

Dimny was then only a petulant child in experience. The war meant to her hardly more than a great and gory football game she had missed. The letter that was to end her youth in a moment and turn all the roses of California black for her was still reposing in a mountain of mail-bags held up by the chaos at the ports of Europe.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

ALICE and her mother and the Tudesqs had not even the old professor to give them a semblance of protection now from the increasing riot in the air of Louvain. Their only safeguard was such chivalry as they might expect from Rippmann, and he was growing haggard with the strain of hatred and terror in the air.

Drunkenness was everywhere. Looting went on openly. Stolen wagons were loaded with pillage and sent back to Germany. Seven million cigars were taken, wine-bottles by the thousand. The streets glittered with breakage. Officers' wives and mistresses came to town to make their selections. The music-loving German nature showed itself handsomely in the number of pianos that were confiscated and shipped away. The commandant of the 53d Landwehr Infantry had to forbid the use of military carts for loot. In Station Square the officers held a barbecue in the presence of corpses still unburied.

In free countries the soldiery exist to protect the people; in Germany the people seemed to exist to exalt the soldiery. The Kaiser himself had put his army close up to his Christly self in sanctity.

It would be cruel and unjust to expect German soldiers to be more polite to the citizens of a foreign city than they were to the citizens at home. They have been accused of almost every other injustice, but they have never been reproached with that partiality.

There was another crime they were guiltless of, the German crime that their prophet Treitschke called "the unpardonable sin in politics, the sin against the holy ghost of statecraft—weakness." They were innocent of human weakness.



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Indeed, they made themselves so odious that the people almost suffocated with the martyrdom of enduring them. The officer in charge of the garrison, the *Etappen Kommandantur*, was named "Man-devil," as if the fates had stooped to a pun. Von Manteuffel rather stressed the latter half of the combination and earned himself in Louvain a fame he never equaled in the field. Battles round St.-Quentin did not quell the feeling that England was about to make an attack. The Belgians actually did advance in a sortie from Antwerp as far as Malines.

The Germans could not understand the Belgian inability to learn a lesson. They had made Pompeiis wherever they went, and still the people did not love them. If these villages were so unconquerable even after they were conquered, what would Paris be like when they got it, in a week or two?

It was necessary to give the French an object-lesson as well as the Belgians. As an officer told the Secretary of the American Legation in Brussels, Hugh Gibson, when he reached Louvain during the height of the devastation: "We shall make this place a desert. We shall wipe it out so that it will be hard to find where Louvain used to stand. For generations people will come here to see what we have done, and it will teach them to respect Germany and to think twice before they resist her. Not one stone on another, I tell you—*kein Stein auf einander!*"

People thought twice and thrice and a thousand times. The more and longer they thought the more impossible it became to respect Germany or to cease to resist her while one soul could stand by another.

It was on the evening of August 25th, the tenth day after the arrival of Alice and her mother there, that the destruction began. And on the evening of the day that Oberstleutnant Klemm left Alice.

The Rue des Joyeuses-Entrées was the scene of some of the earliest slaughter. Fusillades broke out after dark that night. Shouts of command, cries of terror, moans of the dying threw the Tudesq home into panic. Massacre was to be added to insult. The Tudesq family and the Parcots hurried down to their cellar refuge and stayed there,



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while in the street outside there was a new enactment of St. Bartholomew's Eve.

The next day a solitary drummer went thumping through the street, and with him was a police officer acting as town-crier and calling upon people "not to flee from the city, as there was no danger and there would be no more fires."

The Tudesqs and the Parcots went up on the roof and saw a heavy pall of smoke, and flames leaping through them. Then more fusillades, and fresh fires started. Indeed, the definite plan was now under way to make a pyre of Louvain. System and efficiency were shown even here, but the town was made up of slow-burning materials in almost fire-proof walls.

For reasons of various sorts various houses were spared, among them the Hôtel-de-Ville, occupied as an administrative building by the Germans. On the buildings dishonored by their mercy they fixed posters that would have amused the arch-fiend. "This house is to be spared. It is positively forbidden to enter or set fire to houses without the authority of the Kommandant." This was the official form of these chalked scrawls written on a few homes here and there by the grateful soldiers. "*Gute Leute. Nicht plündern.*"

All that day and all that night and all the next day and night men, women, and children were wounded and killed and homes looted, smashed, given to the flames. Drunken sentinels sat in arm-chairs in the street. Patrols went here and there on bloody business. The specially equipped incendiary troops with their pastilles of combustive powder and their syringes of inflammatory fluid carried out their orders. In some parts of the town, frenzied batches of Louvain men dared to fight back and inflict a little revenge. From the gates of the town fugitives streamed along the roads in another of the countless chapters of Exodus.

Captain Rippmann came that morning to remove his effects, and he advised his Quartierswirten to leave the doomed city. His face was dark with smoke and his eyes bloodshot. He did not inspire trust. He dared not criticize his orders. When Madame Tudesq pleaded with



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him to secure the release of her husband, he confessed his helplessness. She refused to desert the father of her children. The Parcots, having experienced the luxuries of life along the roads, preferred to stay where they were.

So Captain Rippmann left them and returned to obey his orders. A few hours later he lay dead on his face in the streets, with a misguided German bullet in his back. The German God had been too busy to take care of every drunkard's rifle.

During the afternoon little Philothée escaped from the black hole of the cellar. She was missed at length, because of her silence. There was wild alarm when it was realized that she was gone. Her adventurous soul might have carried her to any excursion against the German army.

Her mother was for dashing out in search of her, but the Parcots restrained her. And then Philothée came pell-mell down from the roof, crying:

"*Maman! Mees Parcot, je suis monté sur les toits et là-haut j'ai vu—j'ai vu le 'Stair-spengle Bannair'!*"

"*Non! Non!*"

"*Mais oui! Mais oui! Les Américains sont arrivés. Les Américains!*"

She began to shriek, "Oh, seh cane zhoo see!"

The women went up the stairs like driven sheep. The skies were rolling with billows of smoke, scintillant with sparks and with shooting stars of flaming embers. From the Library an upward snow of blazing pages swirled. Madame Tudesq understood that first, and, being a scholar's wife, suffered a thunderbolt of horror. Being a religious woman, when she saw smoke pouring from the cathedral of Saint Pierre that had stood nearly five hundred years in honor, she fell to her knees in prayer.

But Philothée led Philomène and Alice and her mother to the coping of the roof, and pointed her little forefinger down the hazy street to the crossing of the Rue de la Station. And there, indeed, was a motor-car held in check by the débris and by a group of gesticulating officers and soldiers. And the car flew two small standards—one of them the white flag of truce and the other the blessed Stars and Stripes.



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"*Voilà! Voilà!*" shrieked Philothée. "*Maintenant, qui m'accuse d'en mentir? Qui? Qui? Qui?*"

Only a moment the banner bloomed before the eyes of the Parcots, for tears effaced it. They kissed each other, and dried each the other's tears, and clung together, while their hearts ached with love of their rescuing country.

They believed for one rich moment that America had arrived upon the battle-field. They forgot their vows of self-expatriation. They waved their handkerchiefs and cried. But a sweep of smoke and stinging cinders flung a flag of evil about them. And when they could see the street again, the car had moved on.

And no more cars followed it, no troops, no soldiery except the scattered groups of the pillagers resuming their trade and laughing at the lonely visitor from America. It was Hugh Gibson from Brussels, with Mr. Blount, also of the American legation, and a Swede and a Mexican.

But now a flying torch of fire landed on the roof where Alice and her mother stood, a bombardment of cinders came on the wind, and drove them down.

They took one last look from the roof, and saw an old man running furtively.

Philothée cried, "*Papa! Papa! il est revenu!*"

His wife ran to see, and cried down to him. But soldiers came round the corner in pursuit. They fired as he ran. A bullet brought him to his knees. His hat fell from his white hair.

While Madame Tudesq and her daughters wrung their hands and stared, the soldiers came up and drove their bayonets into his back. One of the bayonets stuck, and the soldier set foot on the old man and drew it free, then wiped the bayonet with his hand, took a loaf of cake from his pocket, and followed the others, munching.

The women ran down from the roof and out into the street, careless of danger. Madame Tudesq fell on both knees and caught to her breast the white-haired lad that she had married nearly half a century before. He opened his eyes and murmured the sacred name of the Library!

"*La Bibliothèque! Ma mie! La Bibliothèque!*"



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His ancient wife, herself a library of his thoughts, understood and wept for that as for him. Philomène sought to stanch his wounds and tried to speak courage and hope, but little Philothée saw only the hopelessness of redeeming the naughtinesses of her past. She flung herself at her father's side, kissing the withered parchment of his hand and wailing:

"*Papa! Papa! tu vas mourir. Pardonne ta p'tite Philothée si je t'ai fais de la peine.*"

He tried to smile that understanding which is better than forgiveness. He died on that smile.

Mrs. Parcot and Alice persuaded the frantic women to return to the house. They were helping to carry the riddled body of the old scholar within-doors when a detail of incendiary troops came up and ordered them to drop the body and get out of the street. One of the soldiers nudged Philothée and pointed to the blazing houses, saying, "See the pretty fireworks." She drew herself up in scorn.

But Madame Tudesq fell on her knees before the corporal in charge of the detachment and begged for mercy. Her old hands seized his belt; on its well-polished buckle was the Kaiser's crown and cross and the encircling legend, "*Gott mit uns.*"

The corporal wrenched the woman's hands loose and thrust her backward. At his orders one of his men lifted her to her feet and the other women and the child were driven from the professor's body.

Two of his men stepped across the body and entered the house to make choice of its contents before they set it on fire. The women were not there to see the first flaming curtain writhing at the window. They were shoved forward into the Rue de la Station, where a herd of citizens was being forced toward the railway square.

On both sides of the avenue the buildings were aflame or being set on fire. The air of Louvain had tasted of burning for days, but now it was hot and choking and the smoke filled the eyes and the lungs. It seemed that the end of the world had come and the fiends from the pit were hastening its destruction.

As Alice and her mother entered the station square they



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passed the car with the American flag still fluttering. It stood among the German military cars in park there. But it was empty and they assumed that the occupants had been killed or taken prisoner. It was a reasonable assumption enough, for machine-guns were clattering and volleys from a few desperate Belgians established in certain houses were inflicting some slight punishment on the Germans.

But Mr. Gibson and his party were at the time in the shelter of the station, and presently they would make their way out of Louvain and return to Brussels, dazed by what they had seen.

The crusaders for *Kultur* shepherded this herd with the same gentleness their allies the Turks showed to the doomed Armenians a little later. Indeed, the Turks gave their masters full credit for that inspiration and called their own ruthlessness "the teaching of the Germans"—"*Ta'alim el Aleman.*"

Hundreds of men, women, and children of all classes and ages were crowded into the Louvain station and great numbers of them were driven aboard trains to be carried to Germany. Others were released the next morning and permitted to join the torrents of humanity pouring out along the roads across the fields to other hapless towns.

The Parcots and the Tudesqs were among those ordered into one of the trains, made up of cattle-trucks. Eighty or ninety others were driven into the same car in spite of their cries of protest and their struggles to escape when they found that the cars had not been cleaned since their last load of cattle.

It was a masterpiece of contempt, another bit of Teutonic scatological humor.

This foul derision could not be surpassed, but there was no dearth of further torments. The trucks stood in the station all that night, and neither food nor water was furnished the nauseated prisoners. Sleep was impossible. There was not room even if one had dared to lie down.

The Parcots and the Tudesqs were crowded against the side of their car. They hung there, supporting their weight as best they could by clinging to the timbers. Grief, terror, fatigue, chill, and nausea took heavy toll of them.



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In the bleak daybreak of the next morning the train-load of Belgian cattle suddenly started, with a lurch that sent all the haggard passengers hurtling to the end of the car in a hurly-burly. They re-established themselves as best they could, but as the speed increased and curves were rounded there were constant swirls and eddies of bodies among bodies; women, children, and men fell and slithered in the muck and were trampled. They were so repulsive that they were left to pick themselves up, sobbing with their dreadful estate.

Now and then the train would stop for hours at villages, or in the open fields where icy winds went among the wretches like razors cutting the flesh. Hunger and thirst grew to be maddening.

But there was a worse madness. They were not allowed to leave the car for any purpose at any time. For four days and nights they were huddled there, decent men and women and children of breeding. The first delicacies and modesties that people acquire, the first muscles that humanity learns to control, the first taboos that are taught to babies, and even to dogs, had built up in all of them an instinct stronger than a religion. It fought with nature a desperate battle and made the inevitable defeat in that crowd in that cesspool a degradation unutterable.

It is permissible to describe hunger, wounds, crimes, battles, remorses, diseases, deaths, and some of the sins; but these devoted victims of inhuman immundicity were forced to endure in fact what it is not endurable to read.

One or two desperate persons who managed to break from the cars were shot dead. The rolling cages were packed with groaning, protesting men and women and pleading children. They went along with a doleful sound as of the lowing of cattle dying for food and water and liberty.

The trucks had been marked with chalk, "Civilians who shot at the soldiers in Louvain." The populace at Aix-la-Chapelle crowded about to stare at them as at captive wild animals. And to jeer at them. An officer spat upon one of the priests in the car.

At Aix some of the passengers were taken out and



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marched through streets of insult to another train, where they were carried to the corral at Münster.

The train went on, pausing at Dürren and other towns to give the inhabitants a circus. Prayers for food or drink were greeted with shouts of wrath. Little Philothée was almost in convulsions from fear and thirst. Alice put her hands out to a woman going by with a pail of water for the train crew. She begged for a little drop of it for a little child in the name of God. "*Ein Tröpfchen für ein Kindchen in Gottes Namen!*"

The woman raised the cup to the wan mouth that Philothée pressed between the bars of the car, and, as her lips trembled to gulp, drew back the cup, flung the water in the child's face, and whooped with laughter. It was a famous joke of hers. She had played it first on a wounded British soldier burning with fever.

Philothée almost died of shock at this encounter with the depravity of human nature. She had entered the realm of Frightfulness as a science, as a rite of devotion to that hideous tribal deity which the Germans invented and which they call "*Gott.*"

On the afternoon of the fourth day the car disgorged its unclean, unhuman freight at Cologne.

Cologne stood ready to receive the train-load of Louvainese. Its people gathered about the trucks, prodding with umbrellas, hurling stones and mud, and hooting, "Kill them, kill them!"

In the streets the pilgrims had to march through the gantlet waiting for them. The children were armed with stones, the women with finger-nails and cries of wrath.

Ambassador Gerard describes how pleased he was to read in the *Norddeutsche Gazette* a statement that the people of a certain small town, having been "guilty of improper conduct toward prisoners of war," had been sentenced to fines and imprisonment and their names published "in order that they may be held up to the contempt of all future generations of Germans." He was dismayed to learn that their offense lay not in the mistreatment of helpless wretches, but in the fact that they gave them something to eat and drink!



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The people of Cologne earned none of that Teutonic contempt, but rather a place of immortal honor, for they dealt with these wolves from Louvain in a spirit of the purest ruthlessness.

As they plodded through the rainy streets, the people drew down their umbrellas long enough to jab them into the flesh of the victims. But these suffered too deep humiliation to feel surprise or resentment. They walked their Calvary Hill. It ended in a Luna Park, an importation from Coney Island!

Here in this shower-sodden home of foregone hilarity moldy bread was given to them, a loaf to every ten persons. The guards played their favorite joke upon them, threatening to kill certain men. It was great fun to make them grovel, kneel, pray, and then reprieve them, only to choose another spot for the burlesque execution.

The Parcots and the Tudesqs were ordered into one of the cars of a Ferris wheel. As each car was filled the wheel was raised, until all were full. The others slept in the open on a clean wet ground.

In the morning the dawn woke Alice Parcot in her lofty aery, and revealed the glory of the winding Rhine, "the holy stream," and the bridges of Cologne, the roofs and spires, and the great cathedral, that "Bible in stone." The wheel was slowly revolved again. The cars emptied as they reached the ground, the battalions were formed anew, and back again through the angry mob went the slow parade—minus three hundred men who were kept for trial and sixty of them for death.

The rest were packed into the trains again, and, starved and disgraced, were shunted on and on to Brussels and to Schaerbeek, and then were set on foot again and marched under guard along the roads for miles and miles, to be turned astray at last to find their way home as best they could. Somebody had misunderstood an order and somebody else had corrected the trivial error. The little picnic into Germany was over.

So broken in spirit and body were the guests of German mercy that they welcomed the sight of Louvain with its cold, wet ruins as a Paradise regained. After all, there had



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been only a little over a thousand houses burned. The Tudesq place was one of them, but the ground had not been destroyed, and they had a little wooden shelter erected there. It was the only home they had.

Alice Parcot and her mother had grown so close to the Tudesqs that they cast in their lot with them. Mrs. Parcot had kept her money on her person and it saved them all from penury.

The German conquerors had caught by now a little of the world's fierce wrath at their savagery and they were in a chastened mood. Major von Manteuffel declared a truce to pillage and incendiarism and assured the Louvainese that life might now go on as before. They must salute the sacramental gray uniform, and they must not attack their well-meaning masters again. Surely by now they had learned to respect Germany.

Alice and her mother found at length a kind of comfort in the company of so many miserable people. All the Louvainese had known the German fury. They were sustained by an indomitable expectation that rescue would come from somewhere, if not from the French in the south, or the British in the west, then from the Russians on their way to Berlin.

It mattered little to Alice and her mother. They had no country, no past, nothing but a strange and hateful future. They longed only for obscurity. Even their Americanism was conspicuous, and when the German authorities called on them to register their names they called themselves Tudesq. They had finished with Parcot.

They attended the completion of their destinies, as stolid as trees that wait for fruitage and then for autumn and winter

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## CHAPTER XXIV

AFTER Noll and Dimny had left the streets of Rotterdam, on the Antwerp road, Noll astounded Dimny by producing a bundle of German money, the equivalent of five hundred dollars.

"What's all this?" she asked, as he held it out to her.

"It's something you left in Carthage by mistake."

"I don't understand."

"When you ran away from us, and wrote that note for my mother, you inclosed five hundred dollars to pay expenses. But we don't run a boarding-house."

"But the doctor's bills, and the nurse, and all?"

"They are part of Carthage hospitality. We want you to come back again."

"But I couldn't think of taking this."

"You couldn't think of hurting our feelings. It was a wonderful privilege to have you visit us. When I think what a difference your coming to our house has made in our life—" He was afraid to go on.

She was afraid to protest further. She put the cash in her hand-bag. They were very well acquainted now, for money had passed between them. It was almost like being married.

Dimny's interest was divided between the wintry landscape and her formidable documents of safe conduct. These included a certificate.

*Kaiserlich Deutsches Konsulat*
*Rotterdam*

*BESCHEINIGUNG*

*Vorzeiger dieses, der Amerikanische Staatsangehörige Miss Dimny Parcot*
*der sich gegenwärtig Rotterdam aufhalt wünscht mit Automobil nach Belgien und zwar nach Antwerpen, Brüssel, Dofnay, Luttich zu reisen, etc.*



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It was signed by the Kaiserliche Konsul and stamped with the seal containing a black eagle that looked as though it had been pressed in a book.

She had also a *Passierschein* with a stamp announcing that it had been "*Gesehen in Kaiserlich Deutschen Konsulat zu Rotterdam, Gut zum Reise nach Belgien.*"

The weather was bitter cold and the speed of the car doubled the force of the wind. But at least they were going somewhere and together. They had a goal and they were nearing it.

A long ferry-crossing landed them in Dordrecht. Here Noll paused, according to instructions, to take aboard the German officer who was to accompany Noll into Antwerp to test the courtesy of the sentinels.

The United States flag and the flag of the C. R. B. identified the car, and it was approached at once by a man whose military bearing was rather emphasized than suppressed by his civilian garb. He presented a card that introduced him to Noll, who introduced him to Dimny as Oberst Gustave von Repsold. He was very gracious for a colonel, and he apologized for accepting Dimny's offer to give him her place in the front seat.

Twenty-odd miles more, including another slow ferry-ride and one of the longest bridges in the world, and they whizzed into Rosendaal.

Dimny caught a blurred glimpse of the little cottage of poor Vrouw Weenix. The little hut was closed now and no smoke purled from its chimney.

Her duty to this hapless Samaritan woman fought with her duty to her mother in the court of her soul, and she wondered what to do. It would be inhuman not to intercede for Vrouw Weenix, and yet that intercession might thwart her whole mission.

If only the Germans had shown some mercy toward the spirit of mercy! If only their religion had included some recognition of other people's! If only their simple faith in the divine call to German supremacy had been troubled by some human doubts as to the holiness of some of the means to that end!

A moment more and the car was already halting at the



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dread frontier. Once that gate was passed she was within the claws of the black eagle. She was relieved to find that the sentinel she had tried to pass was not there to recognize and denounce her.

The Stars and Stripes were not guarantee enough for the officer in charge of the examining-post to which the car was conducted in the frontier town of Esschen.

This man, a mere lieutenant, undertook a minute search of the car. With the aid of two *Unteroffiziere* he examined Dimny's trunk and every article in it. He measured it inside and out to discover if there were, perchance, secret compartments or a false bottom. He examined the car, the cushions, the top, the engine, the tires, which he had deflated and removed; and even the inner tubes.

It amused Noll to give him no help, though with the usual fatuity of detectives he overlooked the pockets in the rear doors.

The lieutenant was about to pass the car along when a man came out of the building and took charge. Dimny recognized him at once as the man with the nicked ear and the saber-scar across his cheek, the man who had offered her a ride in his motor-car the day before and guessed that she was an American. Though he was not in uniform, the lieutenant saluted him with respect akin to dread and reported that he found no contraband in the car. Oberstleutnant Klemm was skeptical. He asked for the mail-bag that the C. R. B. car was sure to carry. The lieutenant protested that there was none.

Klemm sneered at him and growled at Noll.

"*Sie sind Amerikaner, nicht?*"

"*Ja wohl, Gott sei dank!*" Noll smiled.

"*Ach, so! Er kann ganz vorzüglich Deutsch! Wo dann verbergen Sie den Briefbeutel?*"

His voice was so raucous, his manner so contemptuous, that Colonel von Repsold forgot his disguise and rebuked Klemm for his insulting manner.

For a German civilian to rebuke an officer is a blasphemy that must be punished with immediate thunder. Lieutenant-Colonel Klemm wasted no time. With a roar of all the artillery in his throat he reached in, seized Colonel von



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Repsold by the necktie and the sleeve, and dragged him through the open door and flung him in a heap on the ground. The colonel's head struck a rock and he was knocked unconscious. Otherwise there would have been fireworks indeed.

Klemm ordered the lieutenant to throw the *Schweinehund* into a guard-room. He glared triumphantly at Noll and demanded the mail-bag again.

It was such a luxury to Noll to see one German maul another about that he chuckled aloud as he leaned across the back of the seat, lifted the flap of the side-pocket and said:

"Help yourself, you blear-eyed blackguard!"

"De same to you and many of dem!" Klemm retorted, to Noll's extreme surprise.

Klemm, muttering threats, opened the rear door and removed the mail-bag. Then he caught his first good look at Dimny.

He glared. His eyes grew fierce with vague recognition of her as the girl he had seen on the road from Rosendaal and as the girl his motor light had revealed trying to run past the sentinel under the shadow of Vrouw Weenix.

Then a veil of meditation softened the blaze of his condemnation. He was remembering Dimny's sister Alice. He had seen numberless women since, and her only for a brief while. But it was his art and practice to remember, and Alice had impressed herself on his mind because she was an uncompleted episode in his adventures. We do not so easily forget what we do not get.

The resemblance between Dimny and Alice was no more than a vague family likeness. Alice had hair and eyes of a lighter hue. But it had been four months since Klemm held Alice in his arms at Louvain, and his remembrance of her was as vague as her likeness to Dimny.

He had her name somewhere among his records, but in the card index of his memory Dimny was Alice.

Convinced that he had seen her in Louvain and remembering well that he had seen her yesterday trying to run the lines, he was instantly assured that she was engaged in some secret traffic. He was so happy over his luck in catching her that he regarded her now with the double



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felicity of a trapper who has snared a prey and a pretty one.

He lifted his hat. "*Bong chour, matemoiselle!* Pleased to meet you again."

Dimny answered, "Have we met before?"

"Twice. Yesterday on the roat from Rosendaal and once before, most pleasantly in—you know."

"I do not know."

"You do not rememper a certain city in Belchum."

"I have not been here since I was a child."

"Ach, so." He smiled. "My memory is better as yours. But den I have so much more beautiful a somebody to rememper as you have."

She thought that he was trying to start a flirtation. She tossed her head and her nostrils fairly crinkled with contempt. Noll intervened by shaking his finger under Klemm's nose.

"Keep back, Mr. Plainclothes-man or I'll do to you what you did to your German friend, and more of it."

Klemm backed away from Noll's hand and glared at him.

"Get out of that car! You are unter arrest. You shall be seerched, and also matemoiselle is arrestet."

"You arrest her! What for, you—"

"Because she is a spy. I have proof."

The fate of Edith Cavell, and the dark mood that hastened her to her death would not shake the world for another year, but dozens of women had been shot in Belgium and hundreds thrown into prisons for espionage. The confusion in Klemm's mind would not confuse a trial board of Prussian officers whose ideal of a fair trial was that it was better to waste lives than time. Alice Parcot, never dreaming that Dimny was in Belgium, was unwittingly threatening her life.

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## CHAPTER XXV

AND now Dimny was well enmeshed in the snares of the German *Geheim-polizei*, the vast world organization of treachery on which Germany had expended four million dollars a year in times of peace, "sowing spies" in order to reap skulls. In that huge directory of souls Dimny Parcot's name and her history were to be entered. The Imperial Government would keep her diary for her, registering her every residence, journey, act.

The German people had submitted to that despotic guardianship for generations, and Dimny was now a visitor in the German realm. When Oberstleutnant Klemm ordered Dimny to enter the inspection-hall and be searched, Noll leaped from the car, prepared to defend her. As he advanced on Klemm, two private soldiers, with bayonets charged, threatened his sides.

Dimny sprang from the car to protect the German Empire from Noll, or *vice versa*.

"Remember your promise!" she pleaded.

"I promised to swallow any insults they paid to me, but I didn't promise to let that yellow dog mistreat you."

"Please, oh, please!" Dimny cried, clinging to his hands. "For my sake and for the sake of the poor Belgians—the starving children that are depending on you."

That was a terrible weapon to cow a man with.

Noll bowed his head in resignation, and humbly marched when Klemm ordered the soldiers to take him to be searched. Klemm kept the mail-bag; all the letters were unsealed—which did not render unnecessary the task of reading them all.

Noll was led into a room and questioned by an officer, while other officers, who were supposed to be psychological experts, watched him secretly to see if by sidelong glances,



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twitching, or other signals he betrayed guilt. When he had told a story too brief to be complex, he was promoted to the next grade, the physical and sartorial examination.

Both his clothes and his person were subjected to such disgusting scrutiny that he could hardly keep his temper from breaking out into battle. His very fountain-pen was emptied and examined. He sneered:

"Why don't you X-ray me? I may have writing on my bones."

The experts made note of this suggestion. It was worth considering for future tests.

Noll asked if women were searched also, and as carefully. He was told that they were. Now his fists were mobilized for a sortie in Dimny's defense, forgetful of his own estate. He paused to ask, "Searched by men?"

The officer shook his head and explained that women were never searched by men unless they were under particular suspicion.

Noll was a little reassured; yet he dreaded the effect upon Dimny even of search by a woman. His anxiety was not without foundation, and he waited uneasily about after he had been permitted to return to his clothes and had signed a receipt for all his valuables.

Dimny was escorted by Lieutenant-Colonel Klemm to the inspection-room for women. His courtesy was as reassuring as the friendliness of a snake, but she kept telling herself, "It must be endured, or I'll never find my mother and Alice."

To her intense relief, he left her after he had introduced her to the police matron, Frau Stosch. He asked especial courtesy for Matemoiselle Parcot, but he annulled it by a wink and a look that condemned Dimny to the most thorough examination.

Frau Stosch was big and rough, a policewoman used to the terrifying of the lowest sorts of street refuse. She regarded everybody as her natural enemy and foreigners as doubly contemptible. She had no English. She supplemented her German with signs and acts. She ordered Dimny to undress with a gruff:

"*Bitte, die Kleider ablegen.*"



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Dimny noticed that a door was open, that a sentinel stood there and that officers and men passed, not often omitting to glance in.

When Dimny refused to proceed with the door open, the matron threatened to call the soldiers in to her aid. Dimny yielded perforce and retreated into the farthest corner, to the cynical amusement of Frau Stosch.

As soon as Dimny took off her hat, the woman seized it and studied it with greedy curiosity as if it were a magician's cabinet. She ripped out the lining and turned it inside out.

She went through Dimny's hand-bag and her heavy coat with the same care, and through her shoes as well, tapping the heels and the soles, and studying the lining. She took them then to the door and sent them by one of the soldiers for further examination, even to chemical tests for concealed writing. She sent away every other garment as it came off.

It was hardly less hateful to strip before this woman than it would have been before a man, but Frau Stosch was so insolent and threatening at her delay that finally, with a desperate resolution to see it through, Dimny flung her clothes off as an autumnal wind whips the final leaves from a young birch-tree.

And then she stood forth in her sapling slenderness, her beauty absolute—not with pride in grace or silken texture, but huddling her limbs together and cowering and turning aside in shame, as she saw her last shelter taken from her and carried off by the sentinel.

Dimny had struggled to keep her money-belt. Seeing the way the linings of her hat, her coat, and her hand-bag had been opened, she was sure that her letter would be found. But it was her money that she protested. Frau Stosch answered hotly that she would get it all back, and snarled that the Germans were not thieves, but "people of honor." And this was in Belgium, where they had stolen nearly everything that could be carried off and claimed everything that remained!

Frau Stosch added the final horror by praising the white victim, calling her "*wohlgebildet, wohlgestaltet, von*



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When Dimny refused to proceed with the door open, the matron threatened to call the soldiers to her aid.

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*schönem Wuchse.*" She followed her appraisal with a relentless investigation. Wherever her harsh fingers touched Dimny's wincing flesh, they left white spots and streaks in the crimson of the one great blush she was.

Now Frau Stosch ordered Dimny to take down her hair, and Dimny was glad of that, since it fell about her like a mantle. But she was not allowed to hide in the flood of it, for when Frau Stosch had felt about her scalp and among the strands for hidden messages, she made her put it up again.

Next Dimny must open her mouth while the woman peered down her throat, probed in search of loose fillings in her teeth that might conceal secrets—thrust her fingers in and searched the gums even. She neglected no hiding-place that the most skilful smuggler had ever been known to use, from Dimny's ears and nostrils to the little alleys between her toes.

Dimny was almost screaming with such infamous indignity. She was in an ague of shame when the torment was apparently at an end. But now the muttering inquisitrix went to a table, cut two lemons open, squeezed them into a basin of water and, dipping in a sponge, sent an icy shower down Dimny's back, then passed the sponge all about her quivering body—and this because, forsooth, citric acid brings out certain chemicals, and certain spies had been suspected of carrying messages and maps written in disappearing ink on the vellum of their own skins.

Dimny was in a pitiable state of chill, weeping with resentment and fighting with all her might to keep from a crisis of hysteria. This would mean to her a deep slumber of welcome oblivion yet of terrifying helplessness. She had a mission that had already been too greatly delayed. She battled fiercely with herself and won. And now she must wait for the restoration of her clothes. She was permitted to sink into a chair under a rug that Frau Stosch tossed to her.

At length a soldier brought a bundle to the door and handed it to Frau Stosch with some ribaldry that won a laugh from that dour voice, but not a pretty one. Dimny's



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wardrobe was in a sorry state. The linings had been treated with chemicals, the seams opened and carelessly restitched; the very ribs of her corsets had been taken out and tested for secret messages.

As casually as she could, Dimny examined her money-belt. While she counted with difficulty the German money, she saw that the secret pocket had been opened and left unsealed. The letter was there, but she could tell from the way it had been carelessly refolded that it had been read, and doubtless copied. But no mention was made of it, and if suspicions had been excited, they were kept in store for later employment.

When she and Noll met, both were shamefaced. They had been degraded and humiliated to depths never touched before. Something fine and sacred had been profaned; the last veil of modesty had been trampled in the mire.

They were molested no further, but were suffered to re-enter the car and to proceed on their way. Neither spoke. Noll's reaction was one of black rage that showed itself in his savagery at the wheel. Dimny's spirit was broken. She was crushed with the oppression of some loathsome guilt that left her tarnished, craven, despicable.

Noll sent the car forward at a furious speed as he raged:

"We've got to keep out of trouble as well as we can—endure everything until the big day when America comes to her senses and even the infernal pacifists see what bloody murderers they are and join the army that's coming over here to take the measure of this blackguard nation. We've got to come. If we're human, we've got to come, and God bring us over soon—soon, soon, oh God!"

This was just before New-Year's Eve, 1915. There was some interest in America in a project to intervene in Mexico for the sake of American lives, peace, and property interests, but it was feared that our army was too small to cope with that troubled republic.

Neither the gracious Oberst von Repsold nor the ferocious Oberstleutnant Klemm appeared to bid Noll and Dimny God-speed. Klemm had entered the inspection-bureau with a triumphant heart. He had the delightful



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illusion of returning to the lost beauty of Louvain, for he was sure that Dimny and her sister were one. He had been called away from Louvain before the immolation of the city, and he had regretted the weakness that let Alice escape.

Now that he believed he had found her again, he believed her to be a spy—all the prettier, all the more fascinating a prize because she had so cleverly duped him before by her pretense of meekness.

He chuckled to think how much cleverer he was going to prove himself than she had thought. She was helpless indeed now, for he had evidence that she was a spy. She was doubtless an American adventuress in English or French or Belgian pay. He would pay her!

His first impulse was to denounce her as an accomplice of Vrouw Weenix. That old she-fox would play no more tricks on the German police-dogs. Klemm's own searchlight had surprised her in the very act. She had been tried that morning and sent out to stand against a wall and receive the compliments of a firing-squad. She was buried now, and out of the way. He would not let the American spy know this, of course.

It would be a waste of material to confirm her sentence by bringing Miss Parcot up before the court martial. To riddle her exquisite flesh with bullets now would be a neglect of opportunity. It would thwart her present mission in Belgium, but it would give no clue to her confederates. By letting her go and keeping her under observation, he might unearth a whole nest of spies and discover an elaborate organization. So Klemm resolved to play cat and mouse with this "Dimny Parcot," as she called herself, though he recalled her use of two different names in Louvain. He almost purred with success.

He went into the office to wait the arrival of Dimny's effects. It would be amusing to go through what documents he might turn up, but he glowed a little, too, at the prospect of searching the clothes still warm from her young body. There is a word for this in psycho-pathology. But the delights of fancy Klemm was reveling in were doomed to a sudden postponement.



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When he entered the office he walked into a hurricane. Colonel von Repsold had come to life again with a vengeance and a need of vengeance.

For an officer of colonel's rank to be manhandled by anybody, not to mention an inferior officer, not even to dream of a police officer, was a scar upon his dignity. It was not a thing to be boasted of and published, like the student's saber-scar across Klemm's ear and cheek; he had doubtless aggravated and perpetuated that with salt and pepper when the wound was fresh. Colonel von Repsold wanted to efface his scar at once. He had a *von* to his name, and Klemm had none. He felt ridiculous in the citizen's clothes that he had stooped to wear for the sake of confirming the complaints of the Americans. He had confirmed them indeed!

He was shuddering with wrath when he saw Klemm come beaming in at the door in a glow of amorous anticipation, with a smile so ample that on the scar-side it seemed to run clear across and loop about one ear.

A people's jokes are an index to their lives, and the Germans are so beset with laws that even a nose that is overlarge is called "a nose against police regulations."

So Von Repsold roared at Klemm with the contemptuous "thou," condemned his grin and ordered him to come to attention.

"*Du, mit das polizei-widrige Grinsen—Achtung!*"

Automatically Klemm's muscles responded to the military cry. His heels clapped together; his hand went to his hat-brim. Then he made out that the commandant voice issued from the very wretch he had yanked from the car.

His hand dropped. His heels parted company. He advanced to strike, demanding, "Who to the devil are you?"

"Colonel von Repsold of the Great General Staff, you swinehound!"

Klemm glanced at the officers standing about. He saw by their anxious faces that he was in the presence of a superior. There was no sympathy on those other faces, but rather a suppressed eagerness to see a victim flayed.



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Klemm was frightened. The gentle perspiration of his amour turned to cold sweat. He stammered his apologies. Von Repsold had no use for them. He wanted to see Klemm's pride in the dust where his own had been.

Klemm pleaded the performance of his duty. "I did not know that the Herr Oberst was an officer," he answered.

Von Repsold took further umbrage at this. He roared at him choice trench words:

"You should have known it, you horn-ox! Do I look like a commercial traveler? Have I the air of one of these shopkeepers that come to Belgium to sell sausage?"

"No, and again no, Herr Oberst. But—"

"You call yourself an expert in character. I call you a turnip-swine. You can see through any disguise, but when I appear in an automobile, you take me for a Belgian because I haven't a helmet on. You are under arrest. You can waltz to Father Philip and stand behind the Swedish blinds and think it over."

'But I have a spy trapped. The Americaness, she is a spy. I know it. I have proofs."

"Rhinoceros! You give proofs of imbecility. The young lady has the special guarantees of Captain Lucey. She is just out of school. She is very charming. I have talked to her. It is her first visit to Belgium since she was a child."

"I saw her months ago at Louvain."

"If I had been in Louvain, I should keep quiet about it. Where is she now?"

"She is being searched."

"That is outrageous. I have a daughter of her age. I will stop it. I have been assigned by the Great General Headquarters to protect the C. R. B. from insult."

"At your peril. I have been assigned to protect this frontier from spies."

"Be careful of your words. You are under arrest. You may retire."

"I insist upon communicating with Number Seventy, Königgrätzerstrasse."

"Communicate with what you will, but don't communicate with me."



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He motioned to the other officers, and Klemm was marched off, almost weeping with rage. Klemm was more eager now to have Von Repsold's head than Dimny's heart. He wrote and rewrote messages to No. 70 in such a swirl of wrath that he could hardly remember his own code or his own code-number.

Colonel von Repsold had the regular army's contempt for the secret army men, and with good reason, for since the days of the slimy Stieber, who carried out the trickeries that even Bismarck could not stoop to, they had stopped at nothing. Stieber claimed to have won the war of 1870 by having an army of forty thousand male and female spies "intrenched" in France before Bismarck brought on the war by a forgery.

The incumbent of the satanic throne in 1914 was Steinhauer, and he had prepared the field with an equal thoroughness that would have gained a greater triumph if Belgium had not thrown herself into the wheels of the chariot. The assurances of the secret police that Belgium would not resist and that England would not fight had cost the regular troops a bitter and bloody disappointment, and the secret-service men were out of favor. Having failed, their wickedness looked ugly. It pleased von Repsold to knock one of them into the gutter.

Presently Colonel von Repsold received the reports of the men examining Dimny's raiment. They reported everything innocent till they found the letter in the money-belt. This was double trouble to the old warrior. He knew all too well that the first German troops had treated French and Belgian women as they had treated French-women in 1870, and the women of other nations at other times. He had been in China when they horrified the civilized nations and provoked the vigorous protests of the American and other generals.

Von Repsold thought of his own daughter, and blenched and bit his lip.

"Shall we confiscate this slander-story, Herr Oberst?" one of the examiners asked him. "We had made a copy, Herr Oberst, for the code-experts, and we tested it for secret writing between the lines."



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"That is enough. Give it back to her, in God's name."

Colonel von Repsold had planned to make his apologies to Mr. Winsor and Miss Parcot for their treatment, but he dared not face the girl, knowing what he knew; and he did not wish to face Noll, wearing the bump he had upon his forehead. So he ordered them released, sending in his stead a personal *laisser-passer* to help them through the further lines.

Then he sat down to write a strong report to the Grosses Hauptquartier concerning the useless and contemptible discourtesies to which the Americans were subjected as a reward for their efforts to take care of the Belgians—and by feeding them to prevent bloody hunger-riots. His report reached Berlin with Klemm's. It was von Repsold who was rebuked and sent into retirement for his interference with the personal branch of the *Geheim-Polizei* which operated under the direct eye of the Kaiser.

Klemm was reprimanded for his stupidity in maltreating a colonel in mufti, and advised to be a trifle more subtle, especially with Americans, since at that moment the policy was to appease them. When he was released from arrest he learned of the letter found on Dimny's person, but the copy had been forwarded to Berlin for the files there. He was assured that the letter contained no address, nor any names but "Dofnay" and an allusion to a Thuringian regiment.

The word Dofnay sounded familiar, for Alice had spoken of the place, but he could remember no other names. Whether to take the express to Berlin and search the records or to pursue Dimny kept him on tenterhooks for hours.

He decided at length on the former course, but sent a telegram first to Antwerp and to Brussels to keep her under strict observation, but not to detain her.

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## CHAPTER XXVI

NIGHT was closing in about Noll and Dimny before the fortifications of Antwerp loomed up like storm clouds over the horizon, and at last the cathedral tower of *Onze lieve Vrouwe Kerk* pierced the edge of the sky. As they came on, it thrust up and up its ornate shaft four hundred feet toward the clouds, the shaft that Napoleon called "a piece of Malines lace." Other towers began to shoulder in alongside, and finally the city was upon them.

The outskirts of Antwerp were sad with industrial death, with dark manufactories, warehouses idle and sealed, wharves mournful and lonely along the bright cold waters of the winding Scheldt.

In certain places there were still ramparts of sand-bags and guns threatening the listless populace loafing the dismal streets past the dim shop windows. In spots there was effort at cheer. Electric street-cars rang their bells, moving-picture shows were flamboyant, cafés were noisy, and old women cried the papers, *La Presse*, the *Handelsblad*, and the *Algemeen Nieuwsblad*. German and Belgian police moved up and down. Armed German officers and soldiers were omnipresent, and omnipresent their placards in three languages proclaimed that the nation of rule-makers had set up here another *verboten*-factory. A pall of captivity shrouded the somber air.

Noll was directed to the Pass Bureau of the Kommandantur von Antwerpen in the Marché aux Souliers. Here there was a dreary wait, another cross-examination, and then they were permitted to seek a night's lodging. They went to the Terminus Hotel, guarded by a sentinel with fixed bayonet, standing at a sentry-box, painted in the German colors, the *schwarz*, *weiss*, *rot*, which in the dusk



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resembled the red, white, and blue, but with so different a meaning.

In the restaurant, German waiters dictated the orders instead of taking them, and the black bread of hard times was doled out as a gracious gift to travelers who had no bread-card.

Noll engaged rooms for himself and Dimny and bade her good night. She was as frightened as she had been in this same city years before when as a child she was left alone in the dark.

But then she had Alice with her, and her mother and father were in the next room. Then her fatigue had been from plodding the sights of the ancient city; her eyes ached then from the tumultuous splendors of the endless Rubens canvases. He had stormed in vain among his colors to reveal the glories of his fellow-townsmen of Antwerp and now they were fugitive or captive, idle, ragged, hungry.

The next morning, on their way out of Antwerp, Noll and Dimny were arrested again. Dimny was taken to a guard-room, cross-examined and searched to the skin again.—this time by a man.

Before he had finished, his victim dropped to the floor in a heap. She was restored by a cup of water dashed in her face.

When she rejoined Noll, he was in such an ague of helpless shame and wrath that he could hardly hold the wheel of the car. He almost wrecked it on an obstruction made in the road by the recently toppled steeple of a village church. Here an old Flemish woman hobbled from a cranny she had excavated in a mound of stones and stopped the car to seize the American flag it flaunted and to caress it with her hands and even to press it to her lips.

She saluted it by crooning in a senile voice a bit of a battle-hymn she had heard her son and the other soldiers chant as they marched off to the war—the stout-hearted cry: "They shall never tame the proud lion of Flanders."

*"Ze zullen hem niet temmen*
*Den fieren vlaamschen Leeuw."*



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Noll could not understand the brave words she croaked, but the gratitude, the hope, the courage her act expressed brought tears flashing to his eyelids. Her farewell to him was the national watchword "Belgium will and shall be free" (*Da België wil en zal vrij blijven*"). He lifted his hat to her and tried to conceal his softness in a gust of anger.

"The murderers, the heartless fiends!"

"The Germans?" Dimny asked.

"No, no," he raged. "The Americans! The pacifists! They say they love humanity, and they let such things as this go on! They hear the wolves howl and won't buy a gun. They say they can make the Germans ashamed of themselves by appealing to their souls—as if they had souls! How could they have souls and endure the sight of Belgium? The pacifists are harder-hearted than the Germans. They say that this must be the last war and we mustn't be in it. We mustn't make a gun or enlist a man. They say it's hysterical to talk of preparation. Well, this makes me hysterical. I was always so proud of my country, but now I'm ashamed, ashamed to be only an American, a spineless, helpless, useless Yankee!'

Dimny understood both his shame and his wrath. She set her hand on his arm and squeezed it. He wished it had been more firmly muscled where she pressed, and he resolved to make himself a man of steel and to devote himself to steeling his country to its inescapable duty.

The road from Antwerp to Brussels had been, but a few months past, a gala motor-pleasance, an hour and a half long, with towns and villages strung like carved beads on a chain of perfect boulevard through a green fieldside.

For a generation the world had been laying out its tourist routes by German guide-books kept up to date with slight revisions. Now the Kaiser's war cast the plates into the scrap-heap, made all geographies ridiculous, filled Europe with a fresh supply of ruins, kicked down cathedrals, emptied museums and cities, reduced towns to stumbling-blocks, castles and châteaux to rubbish-dumps, bridges to junk-heaps; changed all the populations, killing off millions of men, bringing aboard the earth millions of illegitimate babes, transforming the industries and the arts



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to the grim uses of destruction and ugliness. It would be necessary to re-Baedeker the globe.

Along this famous Antwerp-Brussels road, once rich and quaint and prosperous, there was hardly a village unharmed —from Antwerp on past Malines to Vilvoorde, not one.

Beyond Vilvoorde the devastation abruptly ceased, as if some Canute had stayed a tidal wave. Burgomaster Max of Brussels was the Canute. He had saved his city by surrendering it and opening the sluices to the field-gray torrent.

Noll and Dimny were of course arrested immediately on the outskirts of Brussels. They moved on from arrest to arrest until they found themselves at last at the Kommandantur, where Noll was subjected to a grilling.

At last he bethought him of his mother's discovery that the son of an old friend of hers was one of the rich men devoting himself to the Belgian salvation. Skelton was his name, as Noll remembered it, and he persuaded the officer in charge to send for him.

Skelton arrived in haste, and Noll presented his credentials verbally. Skelton threatened to "send for Hoover" if there were any further delay. Mr. Hoover had a reputation for making trouble and of having influence higher up, where his temper was respected. It was decided to let Noll off with a stern warning.

Even Dimny was spared. She was released after a perfunctory search and a few questions. The worst of her ordeal was the ogling flattery of the monocled officials. They were notorious for granting insulting privileges to pretty Belgian women and dealing ruthlessly with the homely and the old. Dimny was nauseated.

When she left the pass-bureau she was followed by shadows instructed to keep her under their hovering care.

She went with Noll and Skelton to the office of the Commission, where Noll made his report and delivered his mail, and where Dimny deposited the list of missing English school-girls who had not been heard of by their parents since the outbreak of the war, five months before.

Skelton told her that the Commission "did a wholesale business in losts and founds," and promised his aid. "I've



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no doubt that the girls can be traced," he said, "but getting them to England will be a ticklish job. The Germans are so afraid that more witnesses of their atrocities may get to the public that they won't let anybody in or out of Belgium except the members of the C. R. B., and we have to take a pledge not to discuss such matters."

Dimny, having masked her errand sufficiently, made further inquiry of the whereabouts of her mother and sister. The records were searched, but there was no trace of a Parcot in Brussels.

Dimny felt sure from Alice's letter that even if they were in the city they would be living under assumed names and avoiding Americans. She felt that she must go first to Dofnay, where they had been caught in the invasion. From there the search might best be conducted, if indeed they were not still dwelling there in obscurity.

She stated her plan to Skelton, and he arranged that Noll should take her thither on the morrow, under the excuse of an errand concerning the food-supply. That was always a good excuse, because a true one. The Belgians were hungry everywhere. The whole nation was fasting, and was doomed to fast not for weeks and months only, but for years and years.

The organization of fifty-five thousand relief-workers, the spending of eighteen million dollars a month, the purchase of three hundred million pounds of food a month, the commerce of a fleet of seventy ships, of mills, clothing-factories, of hundreds of canteens, a thousand institutions, did not suffice to do more than keep them alive enough just not to be dead.

The problem of lodgings for Dimny and Noll was immediate. Skelton recommended the Palace Hotel. It had first been infested by German officers, but an order was issued forbidding them to go there, because, it was said, two English spies had secured papers and secrets from drunken German officers whom they had then shot dead.

German merchants and German Red Cross nurses dwelt there now, and it was a hotbed of secret police. Skelton warned Noll and Dimny.



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When they reached the hotel, a German porter took their luggage from the car, and a German room-clerk scowled across the desk as he saw the English-looking couple approach. Noll hastened to explain that he was American, and there was a slight mitigation of the scowl.

But there was a most embarrassing moment when Noll demanded two rooms. The man at the desk, glancing to where Dimny stood aloof, and seeing how pretty she was, meant to be polite in assuming her to be Noll's wife and assumed aloud that Noll wanted "*Nebenzimmern.*"

"*Nein doch!*" Noll snapped when he understood.

Then thoughts ran pellmell about his brain, as he realized that in a hotel somebody was bound to have a room adjoining Dimny's—two somebodies, in fact, one on either side. It came to him in a flash that it would be better if he were Dimny's next neighbor than any one else.

He knew the perils Dimny ran in Belgium. He knew all too well from her sister's letter how unsafe convent walls had been. Cardinal Mercier himself had declared to the Germans that they had not even spared the nuns.

Noll had thought it all out by the time the man at the desk was ready with two separate numbers. He would keep as close to Dimny as he could, and if need be, fight to the death in her defense.

He said that he had changed his mind. The look he gave the clerk stifled a knowing smile in its infancy. The porter conducted Noll and Dimny and their baggage to the elevator and thence along a hall. He admitted Dimny to her room, and she paused in the door to bid Noll good night.

"Pleasant dreams," he said.

"I am too tired to dream," she sighed, and rapped on the wood of the casement to take the curse off the boast.

She closed the door without noticing that Noll was taken to the next. That saved explanations. He felt a pleasant glow in his heart at being so near to her, and it warmed him through to think that she was sleeping as close to him now as on those far-off nights when she first fell from heaven into his little town and into his narrow life. Here he was,



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and a few months back he had knocked a man down in Carthage for calling the Germans Huns.

Through the heavy door Noll vaguely heard Dimny moving about. Then there was silence. She must be asleep, and he thanked God for the blessing of it on her heavy-laden soul. He was sleepy too, from the long nagging day, but he had his road-map to study from Brussels to Dofnay, and a lengthy array of regulations to memorize.

He worked long and heavily. Before he made ready for bed, he put out his light and stood at the window looking out on the Place Charles Rogier and the big railroad station. The plaza was deserted now by all except the soldiers; for at ten o'clock civilians were required to be off the streets, though ten o'clock German time was only nine o'clock by Belgian time. Germany had improved on Joshua and turned the sun forward an hour.

Suddenly Noll was troubled by a faint throbbing sound. A woman was crying somewhere. A line of light was drawn along the lowest edge of the door between his and Dimny's rooms. She was awake! It was she that wept. The line of light was interrupted by a shadow that passed back and forth silently. She was pacing the floor, barefoot and crying. He could tell that she was trying to smother her grief in her hands or perhaps in the hollow of her arm.

He imagined her as pervividly as he had seen her in Carthage when first she broke from her great sleep, all in white, between the dark flood of her hair and her white insteps.

The bitter torment of her sobs shook his own heart with pity for her orphaned loveliness, her knowledge of irreparable woes, her good reasons to dread the future. Her bravery, her resolution, were wonderful to him; but, after all, she was only a frightened girl crying alone in the night.

He longed to gather her into the stronghold of his bosom, but he knew how feeble a stronghold that was. He looked from his window and cursed the helmets that glimmered in the moonlight, the long gray car that slid by like a crocodile.

He tried to shut his ears to Dimny's weeping, but she sobbed on and on till he could bear it no longer.



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He went to the door and tapped on it softly. There was an abrupt silence. He feared that he had alarmed her. He knocked again. She called out with a quaver of terror in her voice.

"Who's that?"

He placed his lips against the door and spoke softly.

"It's Noll. I'm in the next room here."

There was no answer to this. She was not reassured. He spoke again:

"I heard you crying, and I can't stand it. I can't stand it, Dimny."

She answered this:

"I'm sorry. Forgive me."

"Don't say that, but tell me—what's the matter, Dimny?"

She came close to the door and wailed against it.

"I was asleep, and I dreamed that we were all together, mamma, papa and Alice and I, and we were laughing, and I woke up laughing—and remembered. And—oh dear! oh dear!"

She was weeping again, and leaning against the door; for it trembled as if it were of aspen timber. He stood with his arms flattened out against it in a thwarted embrace, while she wept almost on his breast.

He hung there in a kind of awkward crucifixion, as if he were dead and a tomb-door stood between his helplessness to move and her warm young frantic grief.

It would have meant but the turn of a key to open the door. The barrier between them was no more than that imaginary wall between Pyramus and Thisbe in *The Weaver's* play, but Noll felt hardly so much as an impulse to remove the wall. Her sorrow and his love were guardians incorruptible.

He kept murmuring through to her messages of courage, adding rash promises that they would find her mother and her sister in Dofnay in the morning if she would be good and brave and go back to sleep.

And at last, because the thirst for tears had been sated, and she had wearied the muscles of sorrow, and because she wanted not to distress her friend too much, she ceased



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to cry and told him that she was all right and would go to sleep at once. And she did.

He, too, as our quaint saying is, "went to sleep," for he was young and tired, and a man's heart is but a vessel that must be filled again after it has poured out what it holds. Outside, the night belonged to the hushed voices of the foreign sentinels and the slow tread of their weary feet, and to the chimes drifting down from the towers of the cathedral church of St. Michael and St. Gudule, established in Brussels almost a thousand years ago.

The bells had counseled "Patience!" as sweetly over innumerable past tragedies and would sound on over as many more, perhaps, for another thousand years.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

THE next morning was the last day of the evil year of 1914, and the only cheerful thought about it was that the new year could not possibly be so bad.

Every Belgian felt that "in three months more" spring would solve the acrid winter, fetch flowers from the black soil, and set peace abloom on the briers of war. For hope, like a lying nurse, lures us frightened children past one terror at a time to the next, with promises incessantly exposed, incessantly renewed, incessantly believed.

Noll and Dimny made so early a start that Dimny's spy did not see her go. They did not know what they had missed. They were so exultant with confidence that they took their frequent arrests as merely so many bumps in the path. They ran out of Brussels on the Louvain road, and into the shattered city.

Just before they entered the long Rue de Bruxelles, which becomes the Rue de la Station, Alice Parcot left the Tudesq home to carry a bowl of broth she had made, to a woman whose bayonet-wounds had not yet healed. She made her way with haste, because the air was keen and because the German officers and soldiers had so many comments to make as she passed.

She walked down the street and picked her way across as the motor that carried Dimny and Noll bore down on her with such speed that if she had slipped on the ice they might have struck her. But they were staring at the ruins, and Dimny was pointing out the metal hand that still swung before what was left of what had been a glover's shop.

Alice did not look their way, nor they hers. Sometimes it seems as if the fates were trying to see how close they can come to granting happiness without quite granting it.

Dimny's mother and sister did not think to look for



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them passing in the dismal street. Misfortune loved them all too well to end their trials so soon.

Out of Louvain, Noll struck north and shot along the road that Mrs. Parcot and Alice had trudged in such miserable leisureliness. The road swung eastward through shattered Aerschot, where nearly four hundred houses were burned and a hundred and fifty civilians were shot dead, including the burgomaster, his brother, and his fifteen-year-old son, and where the burgomaster's unsuccessful rival in the last election vainly offered to die in his stead.

The car went skimming through Diest, Haelen and Hasselt and Tongres, each town a blemish on the face of the earth, but a deeper blemish on German history. As they drew near Dofnay, their world was suddenly alive with snow, great faltering flakes of pity like weary gray doves wandering slowly down the air. It seemed to snow upon their hearts and smother the fires of resentment under a pall of ineffable regret.

They had come fast and far, and it was barely two o'clock; yet the snow made a twilight. Unconsciously Noll checked the speed of the car to a funeral pace appropriate to the death of this town. There had been homes here, beautiful and humble, and churches and little shops. Now there were gruesome things as obscene as broken teeth in a cracked skull. There had been people here with lives to live, children and flowers to raise, clothes to make and wear, ambitions, jealousies, loves, hates, successes and failures.

Now there were living corpses with dried-up hearts, corpses that had buried six hundred of their dead under crosses of wood and crude headstones with names duly inscribed. Two hundred more of their neighbors and their children they had buried anonymously because no one could tell who they had been from what the machine-guns, the bayonets, and the flames had left of their poor bodies. A child three weeks old was the youngest that perished here, and a woman of eighty the oldest.

That was pure massacre, savage gorilla-work, and the snow swirling now in the rising wind seemed to be no longer doves fluttering from heaven, but tormented souls



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and ashes of tormented bodies agonizing upward in vain.

There had been a proud bridge, but that had been blown to ruins, and Noll crossed on an ugly military structure. It was the river Meuse, which he and Dimny had crossed in Holland as the Maas. On the other side of the river had been a church of the thirteenth century; one of its two towers had been tumbled through the roof. Its rose-window, as Halasi puts it, "stood out like a vast 'O,' an everlasting exclamation of horror and grief."

A little farther on was a ragged fragment of wall surrounding a chaos of smoke-blackened stones, and brick and mortar, melted glass, twisted wires and pipes, burned remnants of narrow beds, a split cross, a pair of cracked bells, a distorted crucifix with a burned and broken Christ.

They guessed that this was the burial ground of the convent, its ideals, its school, its placid dignity. Seeing an aged nun standing in the snow and mourning over the ruins, they moved up to where she stood, so lost in reveries that she did not know of their existence until Dimny and Noll had stepped from the car and Dimny had gone in front of her and called her "Sister."

The old nun started, smiled with apology for her surprise, then stared, gasped, cried out, and caught Dimny in her arms, sobbing:

*"Alice, c'est toi! Tu est revenue! Ma petite Alice! Ah comme j'en suis reconnaissante au bon Dieu. Et ta mère? Madame Parcot—"*

She looked at Noll, but Dimny was struggling in her embrace, explaining that she was not Alice.

The old nun gazed at Dimny closely, incredulously, saw that her hair was dark where it escaped from the veil tight bound about Dimny's head. She apologized for her mistake and blamed her old eyes and the dim light, but insisted that there was a certain likeness in the unlikeness. Then she asked news of Alice, and of her mother.

Dimny's heart bled at this, and she cried that it was for news of them that she had crossed America and the ocean and all Belgium.

The nun, Sœur Julie, shook her head in new distress.



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Dimny led her away from Noll and talked earnestly with her. Noll knew that she was telling her of the letter from Alice and that the sister was confirming the horror. They talked a long while before they came back to Noll, and now Dimny was drooping from the sister's arm in despair.

"The sister has no idea where they are, if they are alive at all. She has prayed for the repose of their souls if they are—not here. Where can they be? Where can they be?"

They stood in the snow while she went through the depths of loneliness. Then he whispered to her:

"We'll find them. They are safe somewhere. I'll find them. I promise to God I'll find them for you, if you'll just give me a little time. We must get back to Brussels and start from there. We'll hunt every inch of ground in Belgium. They're alive and well—I know it. They are waiting for you somewhere."

She lacked the will even to oppose this harsh project.

The road back seemed longer far than before, because they had no tug of hope to hurry them forward. The wind grew bitterer and lashed them with snow turning to sleet.

They reached Brussels after dark and by degrees were admitted through the lines to the Palace Hotel. It seemed to justify its name, for it had a roof; it was light and warm, with its walls unbroken, its floors carpeted.

Dimny slept long that night and late and woke refreshed for suffering. She found under her door a note from Noll saying that he had gone to the office of the C. R. B. to start all its machinery to work on the search. She blessed him in her heart.

She went down to breakfast, then back to her cold room to wait. She sat at her window in a kind of stupor and pored over the white roofs of Brussels and the Place Charles Rogier, and the sentinels tracking the snow, the traffic struggling along the slippery pavements, the newsboys in shawls shivering and dancing as they cried their papers in pantomime. Suddenly she was aware that some one had entered the room softly.

She glanced over her shoulder and saw a burly figure and a one-sided smile extended by the crease of a scar to the missing lobe of one ear.



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## CHAPTER XXVIII

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL KLEMM, whose name she did not know but whose face was a signal of all alarm, came forward and drew a chair close to hers. She was too chilled with the winter and with her fear of him to speak.

He spoke in treacly English.

"And now, Miss Parcot, I guess ve goingk to resume our little talkingk. You did say at Esschen dat you have not been in Belchum since you are a child. But dat is for the young mans you are vit, I guess—not? Surely now you rememper me, since long before Esschen, yes?"

Dimny shook her head stubbornly. He was vexed:

"*Gott*, but yes you do. And dat old lady—your *Mutter*—she is no longer vit you?"

Now Dimny understood. Sister Julie had taken her for Alice at first sight. This man had made the same mistake. He spoke of her mother. He must have seen them together! But when? Where? The questions leaped from her eager lips.

"Where is it you saw us, my mother and me?"

Something in her anxiety caught his quick suspicion. He sparred for time.

"You esk me? Vy not tell me?"

She followed him up too zealously for subtlety:

"You insisted that you met me. I told you I didn't remember. I asked you where. That was all."

He smiled grimly. "Dat is not all, I guess. Do you rememper my arms aroundt you—so?"

Klemm's arms were groping out to close round her now, and she could think of no escape. Even if she had possessed a weapon to kill him with, his destruction would have re-



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moved the one person in her ken who could tell her news of her mother and sister.

Yet even he could not know where they were at the moment; otherwise he would not have mistaken Dimny for Alice. Still, he had seen Alice and her mother together, and if Dimny could only learn where that was, she would have a starting-place for her search. She might find them actually waiting where Klemm had seen them last. Dimny must work a double stratagem: she must evade her captor without letting him escape; she must wheedle a secret from him without his suspecting that it was a secret.

If she had been a Judith or a Delilah, she could have won him to her power by yielding to him, but she was incapable of a sophisticated unclean duplicity even for such a purpose. She was not great enough, or too good, or not good enough; at least, too young of mind to reason it out. An irresistible instinct overwhelmed her with loathing.

The thought that her poor sister had been crushed in the very arms that enveloped her now made her gorge rise at the thought. She rose and retreated sidelong out of his reach. He sprang to his feet and pursued her. She darted behind a table. Failing to clutch her across it, he ran round it. She thwarted his path with a chair that checked him long enough for her to reach the window, throw it open and poise on the snowy sill for a leap to death.

He gasped with fright and retreated in proof of surrender. She made ready to jump, and he groaned aloud at the thought of such a waste of beauty, even more than at the frustration of his success as a spy-hunter. He put up his hands in an attitude of surrender and cried:

"Shtop! Shtop. Come avay, once!"

"You promise not to touch me?"

"Yes, yes, I promise, on my honor as a Cherman soldier."

She laughed bitterly at that, but there was nothing better to expect, and she was chilled horribly by the gust of icy wind and the vision of that far-down pavement where a sheet of snow she had dislodged from the sill was silently broken to bits. She made to close the window. It was heavy and stubborn. He could not permit her delicate



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hands such a task. Chivalry has always been the most inconsistent of impulses, and it is perfectly natural for a man to save from a smirch or an effort the hands of a woman whose soul he would proudly befoul.

Dimny recoiled from the approach of Klemm, but when he had closed the window, he had cut her off from escape by the mystic door of suicide. The wooden door into the hall he had locked when he entered the room. He was still shaken by the fright she had given him. To permit a beautiful young spy to fling herself from a window would not improve his rating as a spy-catcher. And his fame as a lady-killer would become a joke if he actually killed a lady.

"I not goingk to hoort you," he pleaded. "I voot be your frient."

"Then unlock the door and go away!" said Dimny.

"But I have much talkingk to make vit you."

"I will come down to the reception-hall."

"Ve can talk better here as there. You might be arrested by somebody else."

"Arrested? Again? For what?"

"Because you ditt shlip avay from the hotel yesterday morningk so early that our guart did not see you. He vas eatingk his coffee ven you ditt make escapingk."

"I didn't know I had a guard."

"Everybody in die Belgien has a guart."

"Thanks! I'll remember that."

"Vere ditt you gone?"

"I'd rather not tell."

"Oh, I know."

"Then why ask?"

"To hear vat you should say. Ve get reports every place you stop. You ditt go by Dofnay, vere you tell me before you had been vit your so-called *Mutter*, your *Mammachen*, who live vit you in dat house in—"

She lifted her head so quickly and listened with such a startled eagerness for the name of the town, that he did not finish his sentence. Could it be that she had really forgotten him and was trying to find out where their paths had crossed? He twisted his Kaiserian mustache. It had



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drooped a little. He had forgotten to wear his *Schnurrbartbinder* the last few nights.

Ah, he understood it all! He had been in uniform in Louvain. He was in mufti now. The English bowler, the collar and cravat, the business suit made a different man of him from the tremendous figure in cap and belt and blouse and boots that had terrified her at first sight. In Louvain she had swooned in his arms. In Brussels she was making a fool of him. It was the uniform that did it. *Kleider machen Leute.* All the world was going crazy over uniforms.

After the encounter in Esschen he had sped to Berlin and looked up his records. He found that the two American women in the Tudesq home had given their names as Judson, but that Madame Tudesq, questioned separately, had called them Parcot. The girl had called herself Alice Judson. Now she called herself Dimny Parcot. The copy of the letter Dimny carried had not reached Berlin before he returned to Belgium. He still believed Dimny to be Alice. He thought it odd that she should cling to a part of her name; and yet he knew it as a curious part of spy-psychology that the aliases selected are usually few and of a persistent similarity.

Just as an electric wire can carry a great number of messages at the same time in opposite directions, so the human brain can carry many thoughts at once in simultaneous layers of meditation. Both Dimny and Klemm were thinking in several strata at once. She annoyed him by her refusal to flirt, by her apparent inability to remember him, by her baffling mixture of innocence and shrewdness, by her mysterious errand in Belgium and her air of frank simplicity.

To be diverted from his mission by a pretty girl's fascinations would be disgraceful. To throw her into prison would be to destroy the bait and drive the fish away. The only intelligent course was to disappear from her environs and let his unknown shadows keep her under espionage.

But Klemm could not endure the thought of vanishing from Dimny's presence without leaving some definite



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impression on her memory. It was his vanity that urged him on to rashness, and vanity of a sad sort is a strong trait of the spy-type.

Klemm had juggled many plans while he stared at Dimny, but his first remark was a sudden:

"For vy ditt you go by Dofnay?"

"Oh, I had heard that the ruins there were among the best in Belgium."

"Vat for a business you got in Belchum?"

"It's none of yours, if you please."

"Oh, but yes!"

"Then since you know your business so well, you don't need to ask me."

"Better you should not be so sharp by me. I could do you much harm, you should know. I could get you shooted or put in prison. I can make it that you are deported to Rotterdam, or to a detention-camp in Chermany."

"You couldn't keep me prisoner in Germany."

"No?"

She almost chanted her proud answer:

"I am an American! Don't forget that!"

He laughed: "It is not much to forget. And if America forgets you?"

"She won't. She would protect me. She would come and take me away from you."

"How takes she you avay? How comes she to find you? Even England cannot come into our country and take somebody out. Englishmen come by Deutschland only as prisoners."

"You are at war with England. You wouldn't dare drag America in."

"America cannot be dragged in. Yenkees cannot fight. For making money is all Yenkees are good. Ve can do vat ve pleass by Americans, and nothing comes out."

"You'll see! You'd better not harm any more American women."

"American vomen and chiltren too! You shall see. America sells muneetions to kill Chermans. Chermans vill kill Americans. You shall see."



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He knew that the plans were already laid and the submarine equipment almost perfected for the policy of ruthlessness that should be heralded by the destruction of the *Lusitania*. But he checked his indiscretion. Also he realized that he was getting no forwarder with Dimny. His only recourse was to lull her suspicions to sleep and encourage her to a rash self-confidence by pretending that she had baffled him completely.

"For your protectingk, I esk you for vy you ditt go into Hollant."

"What do you mean?"

"Since I ditt see you last vit your *Mutter*, I see you in Hollant by Rosendaal. I invite you to rite vit me in my car. You refuset. Next I see you by light of my car try to run past de guart. Next I find you in de car of de youngk man of de Tsay-Air-Bay. For vy ditt you do dat?"

Her answer was a sudden question: "That reminds me to ask you what became of Vrouw Weenix?"

"Who is it she is?"

"The poor old woman who was arrested by the Rosendaal guard. Did any harm come to her? I'd die if I thought that."

He looked into her anxious eyes, and he could not tell her that Vrouw Weenix had been shot to death the next day after her capture. He laughed, not altogether convincingly. "Oh, dat old vomans! She iss all right. She had a passport. She ditt go back to her home."

"Oh, thank Heaven for that!" Dimny sighed. "I'd never forgive myself if I caused her any hurt."

Klemm saw that he gained ground with Dimny by the bit of good news.

Furthermore, he felt that he would prosper better with her if he pretended to give up her persecution and met her next as if by accident, especially if by accident he should be wearing his uniform. If he were to catch her either as spy or as woman, he must lay his ambush with better skill. He threw himself suddenly on her mercy.

"Miss Parcot, I make you apologies. I have been most unkint. I loose my headt because you are so beautiful a



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youngk lady, and it makes me engry because you do not like me like I like you. But I know pedder now, and I esk you to forgive, pleass. I prove I vant to be frients vit you if you let me help you. You come here for some business. Tell me. I can help you!"

She stared at him in a new confusion. She could neither understand nor rely upon his abrupt conversion from a brute to a cavalier. Yet she hesitated to discourage such a reformation.

"I will tell you my business, since you don't know it. I have come to try to find a number of English girls who were caught in the invasion and can't get back to their homes. They do you no good as prisoners. They are only in the way."

"*Engländerinnen!*" he snarled. "So! You are here for English! It is English money dat hires you!"

"They pay me no money. It is for common humanity that I am working."

"But for England! How could I help you to help England?"

"It is to save your people as well as the English. There are many German girls in England who want to get home. You ought to be glad to exchange them."

Klemm pondered this unexpected situation. He had a young cousin in England. His aunt had not heard from her since the outbreak of war and was not sure that she had not been butchered by the English. His aunt had wept much and implored his aid in vain.

Whether he was decided by the chance to recover his cousin and the other girls whom German mothers bewailed, or whether he was simply trying to win Dimny to confide in him, he promised to help her. She got out the list. Its length surprised him. He said:

"It is eassy for me to fint dese gerls, but to get dem out of Belchum is not in my power. Only von Bissingk can do dat."

"But you say you can find the girls?"

"Sure! Everybody is in de Registratur. I fint dem eassy. But efter I fint, it is for you to get out."

He pledged that he would tell her just where they all



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were. He would show her how efficiently the German enrolment-system worked. He copied the names in his memorandum-book, restored the list to her and put out his hand. Dimny could hardly refuse it now. She gave it to him, and he lifted it to his lips. Then he turned for the door.

Dimny realized that he was about to get away without telling her where he had seen Alice and her mother. She was as amazed as he was when she said:

"Don't go!"

"I come beck, by your leaf."

"Do! But you haven't told me where it was you met me."

He thought of his uniform and his plan to appear in her presence in full regalia.

"The next time you see me, you goingk to rememper, I guess."

He bowed himself out. The first place he went was the telegraph-office. There he sent a telegram in code with his code-number attached, asking No. 70 Königgrätzerstrasse to send him at once a copy of the copy of the letter found on Dimny Parcot during the search at Esschen.

He received an answer a little later that the copy was being forwarded in the official mail pouch.

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## CHAPTER XXIX

DIMNY was no nearer than before to the object of her voyage. She longed to run after Lieutenant-Colonel Klemm and demand the answer to her question. By the time she had stepped out into the hall he had gone.

She saw a strange man dart through an opposite door. He had the air of a surprised shadow. She felt unsafe with such a guardian and resolved to find Noll at once.

She fastened her hat on and thrust her arms into her heavy coat, then she opened the door suddenly and pretended not to see that the same man dropped back into the same room opposite. As she walked down the street she paused to look into a shop window and her side glance caught the shadow following her trail.

She was tempted to lead him in a wild chase and lose him, but she decided that playing jokes on the German police was poor business.

She went as straight as she could toward the office of the C. R. B. She passed several soup-kitchens and bread-lines at this hour. Once as a child in London she had seen a long queue of poor people standing out in the rainy snow, waiting for the doors of the pit to open so that they might scramble in for the best seats at the pantomime. But these Belgian wretches were waiting for bread.

Poor, shivering victims of alien guilt they stood, bareheaded, famine-wrung, sleet-bitten, pride-fallen waifs of all ages; dejected men; women with scarfs about their throats; women cowled in shawls; women old, young, and middlesome. One woman stood in the snow in cloth bedroom mules; one in high-heeled white-satin dancing-slippers. Others wore wooden shoes and stamped to keep their feet from freezing, and their sabots made a strange, bony clatter like a skeleton's clog. Those at the head of the line



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were being served by Belgian women. They held out cards in their hands, and these were punched by the distributers as the alms were delivered.

One little girl huddling in an old blanket let her ticket drop, and was so cold that she almost fell on her face as she reached for it. Dimny picked it up for her and added some money to it.

She skirted the edge of a public square where a huge block of German soldiers in mass formation went through the ceremony of a dress parade. The band was playing. Officers were saluting, horses prancing, platoons gliding past the reviewing officers like lines of men cut out of wood —all the right feet raised goose-step high, all the left feet slanting to the rear. The army in its splendor turned its back on the poverty and hunger it caused, and let Americans administer the bounty of others while the Germans passed in review before their warrior god, singing his praises.

Dimny passed a woman with a baby in her arms; the infant was blue with the cold and the mother was selling matches.

The hand she outstretched shook so that the paper money Dimny laid in the palm drifted to the icy ground. The young mother bent to snatch it before the wind got it, and when she straightened up her motions were wooden with chill. She poured out thanks, and then hurried away to get food that should swell her breasts with milk for her babe.

Dimny passed a strutting cock of the *Militär-polizei*. He glared at her and growled:

"*Engländerin!*"

She shook her head. He seized her arm. She explained to him that she was American, and asked the direction to the Rue de Naples, No. 46; and that convinced him. He scowled as he released her and vented his wrath on a group of boys who were playing soldier in front of a grinning sentinel.

They wore helmets of paper. They carried sticks for rifles and had a small log mounted on a velocipede for artillery. Their lieutenantlet gave his orders in a shrill



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voice, burlesquing the German accent. They had picked up a number of German commands from the eternal reiteration of them throughout their town.

"*Habt Acht! Marschieren—Marsch! Halt! Gewehr auf! Gewehr ab! Präsentiert das Gewehr!*" And so on, to the great delight of the sentinel. But the boys had a joke they were leading up to, trusting to their heels to get them out of harm's way. This was a sarcasm on the Germans' premature boast that they were on their way to Paris. The boys played it now. Their commander, after various evolutions, gave the order:

"*Nach Paris—Marsch!*"

The boys marched backward.

The sentinel looked sick. The boys were so busy enjoying his discomfiture that they did not see the advancing military policeman. They backed straight into the ambush of his outstretched hands.

He seized two of them by the shoulder and, whirling them, lifted them into the air on the toe of his heavy boots. He laughed as they limped away howling.

Dimny longed for heavenly thunderbolts to blast him with, but there was no one to appeal to. She stored up her horror and made her own escape, round a corner.

At length Dimny reached the office of the C. R. B. and found Noll Winsor there. The building was ornate, the furnishings the relics of that recent antiquity when Brussels reeked with prosperity. The office where Noll worked was paneled with oak in wall and ceiling. Mirrors flashed, and on the mantel fat cupids writhed from overeating. Noll looked up from an American telephone and motioned her to a profound arm-chair. In such a business palace whence the business had flown the Yankee invaders were organizing the war on famine. Beatrice Harraden said that "this handful of American business men showed an imagination equaled by nothing in the realm of imagination conceived and achieved."

Noll told Dimny of the efforts already under way to trace her mother and sister. He had been telephoning, writing, and sending out couriers.

He expressed more confidence than he felt. What he



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hoped, he said he was sure of; what he felt might take weeks, he said might take days.

He had arranged to have a description of the missing women sent to the distributing committee in every parish or village.

He explained the organization to her with all the condescension of one who has just learned a thing and finds another who is still ignorant:

"You see this Commission is a kind of charity trust, combining with the Belgian National Committee to monopolize famine. I suppose we'd all be put in the penitentiary at home for violating the Sherman law or something. The British told Mr. Hoover that they would have put him in the Tower for what he did if it weren't for such a cause.

"We've got a hundred committees and four thousand subcommittees all over the world, collecting funds. There are nearly three thousand communal committees and each one has a little commune of six or seven hundred people to take care of.

"Anybody who wants help has to bring in a *carte d'identité* and a photograph and give name and property and previous condition of servitude. So if your mother and sister are living on charity, as half the people have to, why, their committeemen will know who they are and recognize them from our description, and let them know you are here."

"But suppose they are not living on charity? Mamma brought over a lot of money."

"The Germans may have taken it away from her. I'm sure she would be registered on our lists. So don't you worry any more for a few days."

But Dimny's premonition was right.

Hoping little, yet compelled to wait for days until the questionnaires went out and the answers came in, she resolved to make a personal search of Brussels.

Premonitions, presentiments, all sorts of fantasies drove her on. In youth, especially, what one longs for fiercely one believes; what seems to be too cruel to be true one "knows" to be untrue; what one needs utterly one expects; what one thinks ought to be one knows will be. A thousand disappointments are forgotten and one happy



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coincidence is recorded as proof. In later years the soul, learning the bitter lesson that the intensity and the merit of the desire have nothing to do with its fulfilment, grows to despise this unreliable life and to protract its hopes to another world.

Dimny was still young enough to flatter existence with a confidence in its benevolence and justice. She began to patrol the city. As at Rosendaal, she was teased on by the conviction that her people were in the home a little farther on, or in the second shop. She thought she saw them turning the next corner, and ran after them. Often her heart would leap and beat her breast with wild exultance as her eyes made them out on the street coming toward her. She would press forward, hardly able to keep from screaming aloud. And always it was somebody else, somebody who had no resemblance to them at all. And she would sink back into the depths of forlorn loneliness, hardly able to keep from sobbing aloud.

She asked many questions and learned the chief gathering-places of the populace.

She went to the Hippodrome, whose circus spaces were now turned into a vast clothing-store employing fifteen thousand people. Hundreds of them cut out or sewed up garments in the building, or made up packages which were distributed among thousands of women who toiled at home.

She heard of the society of the Little Bees, *Les Petites Abeilles*, which provided more than twenty thousand feeble children with extra nourishment. Dimny visited one of their cantines at eleven in the morning when the children were released from school to gain strength for the day.

The utter cleanliness was the work of scrub-ladies of social prestige. Dimny found sixteen hundred white soup-bowls in double rows along the slim tables. The waitresses were Belgian ladies who had in their day had servants waiting on them, but now were proud to give themselves to service.

A Lilliput army charged through the rain and captured the banquet-board. Here there was pillage indeed, a tremendous clatter of spoons, a gurgling of soup, shrieks



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of conversation, a baby Babel! There was much stratagem of baby stares, pouting lips, honey voices wheedling for a little more. When the soup was lapped up and the sweet rice pudding came in they greeted it with ecstasy, dancing as they sat.

It was glorious to do so much, but tears ran with the smiles because more could not be done; because these myriads of babies must receive so little, at such mountainous cost; because throughout the world babies were crying in vain for food and slowly withering back to death like rosebuds in a drought—"sweet flowers no sooner blown but blasted." Dimny lingered to help the Belgian ladies lug the dishes away and wash them. The children had already licked them almost clean.

Failing to get any trace of her people among any of the many hives of Little Bees, Dimny turned with sick heart to the charity known as the "Drop of Milk." At the cantines of the *Goutte de Lait* young mothers and mothers-to-be were strengthened with extra food for their double burden. These luxurious ones reveled in a thick soup, a bit of meat or an egg, and a little milk every day! They had medical advice, too, and were waited upon by ladies once great in the land. Fifty-three thousand babies the Relief took care of, and the prize for a careful mother was a little lump of white lard.

Fat was more precious than gold, and the time was to come when German women visiting Holland would gorge themselves with fats and grow drunk upon them, tottering and falling from the intoxication of what the Americans called a "fat-jag."

Dimny blushed to seek her mother and sister in the *Goutte de Lait* cantines, but she knew that before long they might have to make their appearance there.

She walked among the bread-lines again and again and she studied the lists of that exquisite charity which provided for the "ashamed poor," those who had known wealth and were too proud to accept public alms. Even these were sought out in the hiding-places where they agonized with hunger.

Dimny wandered the inferno of want like a Dante



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searching hell for familiar faces. She learned much of what mankind, womankind, and childhood can endure, and the needlessness of the vast famine wrung her to an agony of protest. But the protest died upon her heart.

A nation bitten with everlasting hunger was pitiful enough, yet she saw an almost crueler privation in the enforced idleness of the men. It was a cause of famine and of fierce discontent. There had never been in history such a case where a busy people of seven million was reduced in a day to the bitterest *far niente*. Belgium was the most highly industrialized nation in the world. The per-capita value of imports and exports was nearly three times that of Germany and five times that of the United States.

Abruptly, without warning, in a day, imports and exports were stopped dead. The German Government forbade the use of telephone or telegraph to the Belgians; all letters were censored and delayed, if, indeed, they were passed at all. The railroads were adapted only to the German convenience and made almost impossible to the Belgians. In Captain Lucey's words:

"The Belgians could not travel five miles without a pass which it might take them a week to obtain. And to return from the place to which the pass was obtained it was necessary to obtain another pass, which it might take them another week to secure."

The horses and cattle had been almost entirely requisitioned, together with the grain, the food-supplies, the stocks of cotton and wool, the machinery in many factories, the gasolene. The use of automobiles and motor-trucks was forbidden to the Belgians and their draft-horses were carried off and sold in Germany at auction, publicly, as booty horses. They issued a proclamation that people riding bicycles were to blame if they were shot without warning.

They imposed outrageous fines of staggering amount for the least excuse. They uttered money of their own and turned the finances into chaos. The result was impoverishment everywhere.

The gift of the United States that really counted was its gift of men, men with only their good hearts and eager



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hands, and big capitalists who gave their genius for organization. Most famous of these, of course, was Mr. Hoover. Under his high command, America entered the war against Germany actually in 1914. The name Hoover grew quickly to be a world name, rivaling the Kaiser's in familiarity and adding to the language a new verb.

Frederick Wilhelm Victor Albert Hohenzollern *versus* Herbert Clark Hoover!

The Kaiser wrought his devastation in the name of his God, claiming divine ointment and divine appointment, and rarely speaking without giving Heaven the credit.

The name of God and the claim on God were never asserted by Hoover. He toiled merely as a human for the sake of humanity.

Hoover and the Kaiser were both frustrated and discontent, the Kaiser because his snatch at supreme dominion did not succeed in a few weeks and his dinner at Paris was put off, *sine die*, while armies rose against him everywhere and his divinity was so flouted that the very name of religion suffered because of his professions of it.

Hoover was foiled and heartbroken, too, because in spite of his ferocity, his ruthlessness, numberless children still went hungry, women and men died of privation.

Dimny had learned much of the work of Hoover before she saw him. She was at the office when he came in one day. He looked younger than she expected, a trifle grim, but not at all the saint that legend made him. He listened to Dimny's little speech of homage with a characteristic silence, jingling coins and fingering a pencil as an escape-valve of his extra steam.

Dimny relapsed into an embarrassed dumbness and Noll explained a part of her errand.

"That's more in Whitlock's line than ours," he said. "Better see him."

He dictated a note of introduction for Noll and Dimny to the Ambassador and advised Noll to run across to the American Legation with it.

Then he turned to his infinite task as brusquely as if he were arranging for an invoice of missing machinery instead of the loaves and fishes of a Yankee miracle.



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Dimny and Noll went out to lunch and then to the Rue de Trèves, No. 74, a plain, square house with an American flag and a Legation seal to distinguish it. They were not kept waiting long by the Ambassador.

Brand Whitlock looked more the part. He was tall and lean and ascetic. The sorrows of this people seemed to have made their impress upon him, but that was because the sorrows of people always had made deep inroads on his studious sympathy.

He was a novelist, as Henry van Dyke, the Ambassador to Holland, was, and Thomas Nelson Page, the Ambassador to Italy. Another Page, Ambassador to England, was an author, editor, and publisher. American letters had never been better served than by the action of these writers who put their fictional standards into fact.

Whitlock was a peculiarly great-hearted thinker, a scholar in people, a master of human laws and practices. He had come to believe and to say that the whole idea of punishment was wrong—that the punishment of criminals for crimes had accomplished nothing to balance the hideous weight of its cruelty and vanity.

It was his fate to watch the merciless punishment of a whole nation for the dubious crime of patriotism, to see the innocent perishing in a man-made plague.

It was also his fate to be of incalculable help to a sorrowing people, to add a new colony without bloodshed to the domain of the Stars and Stripes.

Dimny told him of the school-girls she was hunting.

He had heard much of them and from them, but his appeals for their release had been politely denied.

As they discussed the matter, his secretary came to warn him of an impending call from the Governor-General himself, the Freiherr von Bissing, then a recent name in Belgian history, but soon to gain an unenviable immortality.

"He's the one man who stands between those girls and their home," said Skelton, who had come in.

"Maybe I can get him out of the way," said Dimny. "Let me at him!"

She said it with the pretty ferocity of a Charlotte Corday about to remove a Marat.



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## CHAPTER XXX

WHITLOCK smiled and nodded, and then turned in his plain manner and his plain clothes to receive the gorgeous von Bissing, with helmet gleaming, decorations radiant, and saber knocking on the floor.

Mrs. Whitlock and Mrs. Lucey, Mrs. Hoover, and Mr. Hugh Gibson, Mr. Vernon Kellogg, and others came in to be presented to General Baron von Bissing and the Military Governor of Brussels, General Baron von Kraewel, and their gorgeous retinues.

They were met under the truce of afternoon tea and there was nothing visible or audible to hint that the Americans regarded the Germans as monsters of raven who must be stroked and kept purring for the sake of the prey in their claws; nor that the Germans regarded the Americans as fussy, meddlesome old ladies who must be humored for a while till the more urgent business of conquest was finished.

Whitlock's heart was crying aloud within him against the treacherous tyrants, but they were his guests and the Belgians were his wards. Dimny, watching the chatter across the teacups, and seeing the jovial warriors through the veils of their cigarette and cigar smoke, was tempted to believe that what she had seen and known as their work was only a grotesque goblin story.

She was so much impressed by the gracious geniality of von Bissing's long smile under his level mustache, that she resolved to throw herself on his mercy, assured that he had an abundance of it. He was very old. He had overdrawn already on his three score and ten, but he looked gentle and kindly.

He gave her an ancient hand to clasp and spoke to her nervously. When she answered even more slowly than Skelton, he shifted to a deliberate and labored French.



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She told him glibly that she had a great favor to ask him, for the sake of his own people, and he invited her to come to dinner at the Château des Trois Fontaines the following week.

He regretted that his wife the baroness had not yet joined him in Belgium, but he assured Dimny that she would be properly chaperoned.

She was emboldened to say that her affair could not wait a week. Then he invited her to call at the headquarters in the morning. He wrote her a pass on a card and gave it to her.

When the helmets and the bemedaled bosoms were gone the Americans relaxed with a sigh of home-like comfort.

"What a very nice old dragon he is!" Dimny exclaimed. "I didn't know that Prussians could be so—so velvety."

"A man may smile and smile, and be a villain still, as the Bible says," said Skelton, who was a bit hazy about his sources. "He is a slick old fiend. His predecessor von der Goltz Pasha had a fat old heart, comparatively. I guess it was his association with the Turks that civilized his German soul a little. But von Bissing had no such advantages."

"Why, is he cruel?" Dimny gasped.

"Cruel?" said Skelton. "He has signed death-warrants till he holds the record. He was a chum of the Kaiser in his youth, and when he was appointed, he announced that his royal master had deigned to appoint him Governor-General, so he would be it. He is the Belgian Kaiser now.

"He shoots men and women who help Belgians to escape and he puts a murderous tax on the absent. He is collecting a fine of eight million dollars a month from Belgium and he expects to increase it. And because the Belgians don't trust him and his pack, he calls them 'idiots and ingrates'! I think that's the sublimest thing the Germans have said yet! They accuse the Belgians of ingratitude!"

The next morning Noll gave Dimny the addresses of a few of the English school-girls who had been traced by the C. R. B., and with these Dimny was armed to storm the citadel of von Bissing.

She found her way, after asking and being asked many



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questions, to the office of the Governor-General, and joined the throng in the anteroom. She heard the voice of a furious old man piercing the door with its childish treble, and by and by the door was thrown open and General von Bissing himself appeared there, driving out a confused and stammering wretch in uniform.

The officers and soldiers in attendance leaped to their feet and clicked their heels so smartly that Dimny automatically imitated them.

The sight of her with hand to brow caught von Bissing and melted him slightly. He stared, bowed, motioned her to enter, while he finished off his victim.

Colonel Klemm had wished that Dimny should see him in uniform, hoping that the glorious sight would waken her memory of him. But he had not counted on her seeing him undergoing an official spanking.

He recognized her as she passed through the door, and was glad that she did not recognize him. He kept bowing, saluting, stammering, till von Bissing turned his back on him. Then he fled while the Governor-General slammed the door on himself and Dimny.

Von Bissing was still muttering. He justified his wrath by tossing on the table in front of Dimny's eye a copy of *La Libre Belgique*, the one uncensored journal in Belgium. Dimny had heard a little of its surreptitious publication, in cellars, garages, and other brief resting-places.

The Germans had sought high and low for its editors and printers, raiding, offering rewards, and setting the whole force of a thousand spies upon its elusive trail.

But somehow it kept on appearing, and so ingenious were its publishers that, according to popular tradition, a copy of every issue was promptly placed on von Bissing's desk. Not to catch the publishers was bad enough, but to find the paper magically smuggled into the impervious headquarters was maddening.

The crowning satire of this issue was a doctored photograph of von Bissing with a copy of the paper itself in his hand, and beneath it a legend, "Our dear Governor, disheartened by reading the lies of the censored journals, seeks the truth in *La Libre Belgique*."



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It was this that had strangled von Bissing with fury at his inept secret police. The burden of his ire had fallen on Lieutenant-Colonel Klemm, who was instructed to leave the publisher's head or his own on von Bissing's desk.

The Governor proffered Dimny a chair and announced himself at her service. She spoke with a double timidity of foreign syntax and of the despot whose word could soothe or break so many hearts. Remembering how Lieutenant-Colonel Klemm's face had darkened at her appeal for the English girls, she approached the subject from another angle, as she had rehearsed it in her room at the Palace Hotel.

"I come to ask His Excellency to do a great kindness to many German mothers," she began in slow French.

He lifted his eyebrows in polite interest.

She went on:

"*Excellenz*, on my way from America I had to pass through England."

Von Bissing saluted the hateful word with a grunt.

"I learned that there are numbers of young German women in England who are not permitted to go home. Their mothers do not even know if they are alive or in prison or where."

Von Bissing nodded and murmured a prayer that *Gott* would *strafe* England. Dimny continued:

"It seemed to me such a pity that the poor young girls should be left in a hostile country."

"A pity! A crime!" said von Bissing. "But how to get them home?" He had walked into her amiable snare.

She drew the cord. "I learned that the English will send them back on one condition—"

"England makes conditions!" he sneered.

"That they receive in exchange an equal number of English girls who are held in Belgium."

Von Bissing's sly soul paid her the tribute of a foxy smile.

"Very neatly managed, my dear," he laughed. "You come in at the back door. You wish to save English girls, but you approach me by my tender side. But it is hard to be clever without being too clever. I could have you arrested as a secret agent for England."



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"*Excellenz!*" she gasped. "What harm could it be to Germany to exchange a few girls for a few girls?"

"What harm?" he raged. "Either you are too innocent to be abroad, or you think I am. Those English do not want these girls because they love them. What do their hard hearts know of *die Heimat* and of *die Familienliebe?* No, those English swine want those girls for exhibition."

"For exhibition?"

"Yes, as proof of the atrocities they accuse us of. They want to show them and tell the world what beasts we are."

Dimny started an ironical, "But have there been atrocities?" She feared to tamper with his wrath; she simply explained:

"But these girls are all unharmed."

He whirled on her with a surprise more eloquent than documents. "Intact? These girls are unharmed?"

"All of those that we have found. They have been frightened, of course, and some of them lost their clothes and their money and their wits, but they are in other convents and getting along well enough."

Von Bissing exulted over the discovery. He was grateful to Dimny for bringing him specimens of a sort that would redound to German credit. He did not realize the true horror of the implication. A few girls were unharmed and, as he said, "intact" and they made an important exhibit in the defense of Germany from the indictment of the world.

Von Bissing put the brake on his racing delight and said: "Well, perhaps it would do no harm to send these girls back. It would rid Belgium of the expense of feeding them. I will grant you this favor since you ask it so prettily and since it means the rescue of certain poor German girls. They may bring back a little useful information," he chuckled, then caught himself again. "How many girls are there, my dear?"

"I have here the names of only half a dozen. But the others are being searched for by Oberstleutnant Klemm."

Von Bissing roared the name in angry wonder.

"Perhaps that was what diverted the cabbagehead from chasing the publishers of the *Libre Belgique*."



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"I beg your pardon, Excellency?"

"No matter. Well, you have done the man a favor. I will spare him once more and return him to your service. Since he has been in attendance upon so fair a lady he must be forgiven much."

He lifted her hand and kissed it. She managed to keep from shivering visibly. The telephone-bell rang. He grew brusque.

"Run along, now, my child, and I will send this Klemmschwein to you. He will arrange the passports and the details of the exchange. Come to dinner next week if you can? Au refwar, ma tchère."

Before she understood that she was dismissed he had hurried her across the room, opened the door for her, and bowed and smiled her out. The anteroom populace rose and bowed. They interpreted the Governor-General's cordiality according to their own characters.

Dimny opened her lips to speak of her mother and her sister. But the door was closed. The telephone was ringing impatiently. Perhaps God's secretary was calling him from Berlin.

She stood a moment with tears burning her eyes because she had not interceded for her mother and her sister. Then she remembered how harshly von Bissing had refused to repatriate the English school-girls until he had found that they could be safely returned. What answer would be given if Dimny asked for the release of Alice and her mother in their damned and damning estate? She felt that she had only raised up a new foeman, who could construct obstacles by magic.



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## CHAPTER XXXI

ON her way back to the Palace Hotel an officer hove alongside and spoke: "Goot efternoons, Mees Parcot."

The familiar voice startled her, as well as the sound of her name in Brussels streets. She stopped short and looked up. Then moved on.

"You don't know me, I guess. I am Oberstleutnant Klemm."

She greeted him now with cordiality, for she wanted to see him. "Oh, how do you do! I didn't know you in all that get-up."

He was puzzled. Believing her Alice, he said: "But it was so you see me de feerst time."

She understood that he was recurring to his memory of Alice and she did not want to undeceive him yet.

"Oh yes, of course," she faltered.

That satisfied him for the moment. He marched alongside, and she explained how he had got into von Bissing's bad books and how she had got him out. His heart was genuinely warming toward her now. She had proved herself useful. From being a helpless victim who had only her prettiness and her mystery to commend her she had become a potent go-between who could deal out the favors of the Oberst-General.

Klemm still believed her a spy, but perhaps she was one of those convenient two-handled spies who work for both sides. She might be persuaded to come over into the German camp and accept a commission. In any case, for the immediate present he had been detailed to act as her adjutant. The billet would be ever so much pleasanter than nosing after the slippery publishers of *La Libre Belgique*.



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When they were seated in one of the lounging-rooms of the Palace Hotel, he took from his pocket the names of the English girls. He had found in his researches the names of many more than she had brought—all scattered through twenty towns and villages.

He explained the steps that must be taken for the securing of passports, the photographing of each girl so that her portrait might adorn her passport; the delivery of the girls across the frontier into Holland, and the reception of their equivalent in German maidenhood. He promised to take all of that work off her hands.

She was almost irresistibly moved to put away her resentments and tell him frankly who she was and why she was there, and to plead for his help in finding her mother and sister. But she feared that the moment she told the truth she might lose her hold on him. He might oppose difficulties, deny her request, spirit her mother and sister away. She had learned enough of ruthlessness by now to believe it capable of anything unmerciful.

She had seen how fierce von Bissing grew at the suspicion of an appeal to his tenderness; how little it meant to him that either German or English mothers or daughters should pine in exile; how greedy he was to use them as a countercheck to English propaganda—as greedy as he would be to hurl German men or women to death as a countercheck to English commercial prosperity. She saw all this and she understood that she dealt with a machine and not with a human government. She dreaded the least misstep.

She was terrified as she had once been when her father took her through a huge factory and she saw everywhere belts running snakily to seize her by the hair and draw her into the cogs, claws clutching at her skirts, hammers calling to her to be crushed, malice and torture everywhere and nothing to appeal to in the noise and hurry. The engineer who could stop it all was hidden somewhere, inaccessible.

She was a girl. She had succeeded thus far because she was a girl. She was groping her way through a wilderness of manifest perils and of perils only dimly understood.



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One misstep, one unhappy word, and she was lost, and her mother and sister with her.

Her one prescribed course was to discount and distrust everything Klemm seemed to feel or mean. The one secret she had she meant to keep from him.

Whether she reasoned well or not, that was her reasoning. She gave all her heart to the task of restoring the English girls.

Though she could not trust Klemm with her perfect confidence, she could not deny him a certain cordiality as the bearer of good news, the instrument of good works.

They were getting along famously well with their plans when Noll came upon the scene. He saw them before they saw him. He saw a German officer talking rapidly and gaily to his Dimny, and her listening with laughter in her eyes and friendship in her smile.

As Dimny laughed she glanced past his shoulder and saw Noll, darkening into an Othello with jealousy.

Dimny was flattered by that anger of his, but she was too solemn a little body nowadays to take pleasure in tormenting even a lover. Her laugh died in a gasp, and Klemm, noting the change, followed the line of her gaze and, turning, saw Noll Winsor in the offing.

Klemm recognized him at once as the courier of the C. R. B. and remembered at once his imprudence at Esschen. He was furious at him for two reasons, his past dereliction and his present intrusion.

Dimny dreaded a clash now. In her alarm she mumbled, "You two have met, haven't you?"

Both nodded in grim silence. Dimny tried to kindle a little conversation.

"Colonel Klemm was just telling me," she said, "how he besieged a convent and how he threw the old Mother Superior into a state of nerves." She laughed encouragingly, but Noll growled:

"*Jedes Tierchen hat sein Plaisirchen.*"

Klemm drew himself up in amazed wrath, but Dimny said:

"And what might that mean?"



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"Every little beast has his little feast, his little pet amusement, you might say!"

Klemm was breathing hard at the insult, but Dimny drifted between the two men, groping for words and finding only:

"Where on earth did you hear such a thing?"

"Oh, my mother used to say it!"

"Your mother?"

"Yes. She was German, you know."

"No, I didn't know." Dimny sighed with all the tragedy of a Juliet learning that her Romeo was a Montague.

But Klemm was startled out of his wrath by the surprise of Noll's admission. He turned to Noll with a flood of questions in German which Noll answered fluently, but angrily.

Klemm complimented him on his idioms. They were old-fashioned, he saw, and spoken with a ghastly American accent, but they were not the phrases a foreigner learns by rote from a text-book.

A new idea was fermenting suddenly in Klemm's brain. Perhaps he could use Noll to advantage, to the advantage of himself as well as of the Fatherland.

Klemm made an excuse of continuing Miss Parcot's business, and left. When they were alone, Noll found that a faint change had come upon the spirit of Dimny's manner toward him. It was indefinable, like a little shapeless mist that could not be seized, nor yet ignored. He said at last:

"Does it make a difference to you that I am part German?"

"Oh no—oh no!" she sighed, with a reluctance that meant, "Oh yes—oh yes!" She added, "You couldn't help that, could you?"

He laughed bitterly. "No. When I learned about it, it was too late to change." He felt a kind of disloyalty to his mother in the flippancy of his manner, but he could not lift himself by his own boot-straps to the height of defending that side of his heritage. He managed to say:

"It doesn't make much difference what a man's blood is;



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it's his heart that counts. The Kaiser is half English, you know, and it didn't seem to help him much.

"My grandfather fought in the Union army and there were plenty of Germans in the Revolutionary War. There was old Muhlenberg, for one, the preacher who wore his uniform into the pulpit and led a regiment away."

"But he was fighting the English," Dimny put in, regretting her helpless alienation from Noll.

"No, he was fighting the German King of England. George was a Hanoverian, you know, and a rotten tyrant."

"Still, it was different," she murmured.

"Of course it was," he cried, "but there were plenty of Englishmen in America then who fought against England in seventy-six and there'll be thousands of Germans in America who will fight against the Kaiser in nineteen—whenever this war reaches us—or the next one—for the Kaiser and Uncle Sam have got to fight it out sooner or later, and the sooner we begin to commence the sooner it's over."

Dimny stared at him with amazement. "You really want to see the Kaiser whipped?"

"Of course! I want to see him on Elba or St. Helena. I'm ashamed to live in a world that lets a divine monarch strut around. If his own people don't chuck him overboard, then we've got to help."

"Do you think there's any hope of his own people?"

"Not much. They've been caught too young. They've been poisoned from the cradle. They've been brought up to speak of the crown with such reverence that they believe it. They'd blush with shame to be caught in a *lèse-majesté*.

"I remember my cousin who came over from Germany to visit us. He was a very decent young cub—Duhr, his name was, Nazi Duhr—good sense of humor and plenty of brains till we spoke a little flippantly of his Kaiser, and then he was like an insulted priest.

"By the way, he might be of help. If your mother and sister are interned in Germany, he could help us to find them. I promised my mother I would go to Germany and see her sister. I sent her some money when she wrote



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that she was hungry. They'd feel under obligations. It would be a good excuse for me to get a passport. And, once inside the lines, I could travel about all right. There are any number of Americans in Germany. Ambassador Gerard is there. He could help. Why haven't I thought of it? Germany is the place to go. You could come along. I could call you my cousin—or something."

Noll was aglow with enthusiasm, but Dimny was not catching fire. She had not recovered yet from the shock of learning that Noll was in part a German, and had relatives in Germany, and was going to make an ally of a certain German officer. She could not glow at this. She said:

"What regiment does your cousin belong to?"

"I don't know the number," Noll said, "but it was one of the Thuringians."

Dimny nearly screamed aloud at that word. It had haunted her for months. It was the only name in her sister's letter. She did not know that Noll had wakened her once with it from her sleep in Carthage to a delirium that she had never recalled.

She bade Noll a curt good-by and started for her room.

And Noll, staring after her, suffered a new wound. He was beginning to pay a penalty for the sins, not only of his ancestors, but of collateral descendants as well.

As Noll was about to leave the hotel, he carried such freight of sympathy for Dimny that he did not see Colonel Klemm beckoning to him, nor hear his voice, till Klemm hastened to catch him by the elbow and murmur a "*Bitte, mein Herr! Auf ein Wort.*"

Noll looked at him with a startled and surly, "Well?"

Klemm's face was wreathed with smiles in spite of the rebuff. He pleaded:

"*Haben Sie Lust spazieren zu gehen?*"

"Take a walk? With you? Why?" Noll answered, bluntly.

Klemm begged him to speak German and to be assured that what was to be said was for Noll's own good. Noll felt that there was something in the wind and curiosity overbore his antipathy. He consented to walk with



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Klemm, who explained that he spoke in strict confidence and that the best place to discuss a secret matter was in the open.

Noll went along uneasily. Klemm linked arms with him, keeping his right hand free to return the incessant salutes of the passing soldiers. Noll shared this glory, such as it was.

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## CHAPTER XXXII

NOLL WINSOR was neither reassured nor flattered, but altogether dazed to find himself strolling arm in arm with a uniformed lieutenant-colonel of the German host. Klemm led him about the Place Charles Rogier in the roped-off spaces where Brussels' citizens were now forbidden to promenade. After some laboriously casual small talk, Klemm began to discuss America.

He spoke of it with envy as the land of ease and of easy wealth, of abundant food and comfortable hotels, a paradise nowadays while Europe was a hell. He thought it strange that Herr Vinsor should have left so comfortable a place without compulsion. He must be very rich and in search of new sensations.

Noll protested that he was not rich, but poor; and that he did not like the sensations he was getting. Klemm regretted that Belgium had to be invaded, but it was war-times, and "necessity breaks iron."

He asked Noll how his sympathies were, and Noll, remembering his promises not to offend the conquerors, answered diplomatically.

Klemm spoke of England's tyranny and the way that Germany was hampered in her development. He recurred to America, and said that he had been hoping for an assignment thither on diplomatic business and for the encouragement of the great German element.

He raged against the English propaganda and pleaded that it was perfectly proper for Germany to fight England in America or anywhere; to destroy bridges and munitions-factories, scatter false rumors, threaten Congressmen with political raids, and encourage pacifism. He laughed at the cleverness that the Germans, of all people, showed in subsidizing the anti-militarism movement in the United States



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and scattering slanders against the motives of those who advocated preparedness.

This was strong meat for Noll to stomach, but he kept his temper, for he saw that Klemm had an ulterior purpose. He brought Klemm up at length with a sudden, "What's the short idea in this long lecture?" (*"Was ist der langen Rede kurzer Sinn?"*)

Klemm hesitated, then asked Noll to tell him freely how he felt toward the Fatherland. Noll stressed his German affiliations and his earlier feelings, and neglected to mention his rapid conversion to anti-Teutonism. He remembered the Biblical injunction to speak to a fool according to his folly, and revised it to read, "Speak to a spy according to his duplicity."

It rather amused Noll to pretend to be caught on Klemm's hook. He resisted just enough to make it interesting.

Klemm was convinced that Noll was fallow for the seeds of conversion and began to scatter hints that Germany needed the help of her sons across the sea, and of all those who had the sacred blood of Teutonism in their arteries. There was a great work for Noll to do if he were ready for it.

Noll's heart knocked against his ribs. He had not foreseen this. "I don't quite understand," he faltered.

"*Deutschland* needs you. *Deutschtum* needs you. *Kultur* needs you more there than here. You can do more good for the cause of civilization in America than in Belgium. Let these pro-British Yankees feed the Belgian swine. You should go back home and work for the true good of your country. Plenty of Americans work for us. I could show you the receipts of some of them—their names would surprise you. America is as full of German agents as an old dog is full of fleas! They are well paid, too."

Noll's voice stuck like a bone in his throat. He coughed to dislodge it. "How much—how much would I be worth to the Kaiser?"

"That depends, of course, on what you accomplish. For small jobs, small pay; for big jobs, big. If you put a little article in a paper, that is something. If you blow up a munitions-factory, that is much. We have secret-



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service men there. We need some one to guard the guards. We need decoys. It is safe, it is comfortable, it is profitable."

"There's a But to that." ("*Es ist ein Aber dabei.*")

"Let us discuss the *Wenns und Abers.*"

He was already gloating over Noll as a captured, corrupted victim. Noll felt such a loathing of him that he could not control himself. A few words more and he would have to throttle the scoundrel. If Klemm did not take his arm from Noll's elbow Noll would have to knock him down and beat him up. He made haste to escape before his temper mastered him.

"I'd like a chance to think it over."

"I understand, my dear Herr Vinsor." Klemm patted Noll's shoulder so benignly that Noll had to put his fist in his pocket to keep it out of Klemm's face.

He turned to leave at once, but a sudden thought arrested him. He spoke of his mother's sister and her son and of his desire to know where Nazi Duhr might be.

"You shall know at once," Klemm promised. "I will give you a peep at the efficiency of the German system. Give me his name and home and I—as you dear Americans say—I will do the rest."

Noll gave him what information he had and Klemm promised him a dazzlingly quick reply. They parted forthwith. As Noll hurried along the street he saw that the eyes of the Belgians were reproachful. They were the eyes of hounds that have been tricked and beaten. He shuddered with hatred of the rôle he had assumed.

The next morning he found a note from Klemm under his door. It informed him that Leutenant Nazi Duhr was with the First Thuringian Regiment temporarily stationed at Louvain.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII

ON that very day Dimny's sister and mother were talking of her in Louvain. There was no weird coincidence in that, for they were almost always talking of her.

They wondered where she was and how she was, and if she had ever received their letter, and whether they ought to have written it, and whether they ought not to write another and tell her not to worry about them since they were at peace.

And they were at peace—of a sort, for they had grown used to their fate, resigned to their condition, and that is about all there is to peace.

As dusk drew on they put away their sewing and went out for their daily walk. They preferred not to go abroad in the full light. They had the American woman's timidity of their estate, and with better reason than usual, for they had no husbands to walk with them and take pride in their promise.

They left the wooden shed that had been hastily built among the ruins of the Tudesq home and moved up the Rue des Joyeuses Entrées which becomes the Rue Vanderhelen, past the Place du Peuple, and among obscure rubble that had been homes.

The city authorities had busied themselves trying to restore the town. The streets had been cleaned of ruins and sidewalks opened through the avalanches of scorched stone and brick.

They turned into the Rue de la Station, one long eyesore of devastation. They did not visit the gutted walls of the Library, but walked mournfully, as through a cemetery, down the once busy avenue leading to the Station Square where the statue of van der Weyers, one of the builders of Belgian independence, surveyed the broken shards that remained of his proud city. The dead bodies had been



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carried off long since, and rain and snow had cleansed away the stains, but had brought new suffering to the living.

Alice and her mother turned down the shattered Boulevard de Tirlemont, which would lead them back to the Rue des Joyeuses Entrées. Much murder had been done along this road and a cataract of fugitives had gone tumbling and eddying down it to the Tirlemont Gate and out along the doleful plains.

As Alice and her mother trudged slowly a line of soldiers marching in from Liége passed them. They were used to soldiers. They came in from the east gay and brisk, with bands playing and uniforms fresh, for they were on their way to battle. They came in from the west slow and limping and shabby, without music, after the battle.

Sometimes the men in the ranks shouted ridicule at the two women, but they paid no heed. And so when now they heard a voice crying out at them they did not even look.

They hardly realized that a voice had risen from the dull surf of marching feet till a young officer darted from the ranks and ran to them. He seized Alice by the arm and stared into her face.

She recoiled and looked at him in amazement. He spoke to her excitedly in German, but she did not understand a word he said.

Then there came an angry yell from the passing column, and it dragged him back into the line as if with a lasso.

He cried back at her, "*Auf wiedersehen!*" and she lost sight of him as he ran along the flank, seeking his place.

Alice and her mother stood wondering. Neither of them recalled the young man. They spoke of him with bewilderment, then gave him up as a riddle without answer.

The next day they avoided the Boulevard de Tirlemont and sauntered, as one saunters a sadly cherished graveyard, through the old market-place.

There Alice was again accosted by the same young officer. He spoke to her again in German, but she shook her head and moved on. He followed and kept at her elbow.

There was nobody to appeal to for protection, since the Louvainese had learned too well not to resist, and the soldiers they passed would not have come to their aid.



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At length the young man essayed English. "You have by Dofnay been, yes?"

The shock of fright the word sent through Alice was answer enough to that.

"*Ich auch*—me besides, I was there. I did seen you there. I did came to Kloster—to convent—not alone, but—You are remembering of me now, yes?"

Alice trembled as if she were freezing in a sleet of icy memories. He could not tell whether her head shook in denial or only in the ague of torment.

"I did hope you should remembered me, for I cannot forget of you. I was very bad against you, but after when I am in battles I beg Gott to make me dead. At last His good bullet finds me, but I do not died. They send me to my home to die. I live yet. But I have sisters, two, and I think always where are you. My body gets sound already, but *meine Seele—meine* soul is sick. I pray Gott He brings me to you and so now He does. For few days I going rest by Loewen here. I shall to see you. Now you are remembering me—Leutnant Duhr my name is—Ignatius Duhr—Nazi. I did telled you my name ven you are in my arms. Now you are remembering, yes? No? *In Gottes Namen*, don't say no!"

"No!" she groaned. She cried it aloud again, "No!" and again, "No!"

And it seemed that fate had invented a pluperfect torture in recalling from oblivion this haggard youth and bringing with him no memory to re-establish him even among her loathings. And he was weak from his old wound, and his eyes were the windows of a haunted house. The furies of remorse were about him and he had fled to her in pity and shelter. And she could not even deny the claim he made upon her. She did not remember him at all. And if she could have remembered him—what then?

She moved slowly away from him. He did not seize hold of her, but followed at a distance like a lonely hound. When he saw where she and her mother lived, he stared a long while, then turned and walked back to the house where he was billeted.

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"My name is Ignatius Duhr—Nazi. I did telled you my name ven you are in my arms. Now you are remembering, yes?" "No!" she groaned. She cried it aloud again, "No!" and again, "No!"

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## CHAPTER XXXIV

KLEMM, rejoicing in the capture of Noll, made haste with his business of getting rid of the English girls. He wanted to get rid of Noll, too, and to use him at the same time. That would be, as the Germans say, "to swat two flies with one slap."

Klemm knew Dimny already well enough to realize that he could make her no gift that would so enhance him in her eyes as the privilege of being the bearer of a flag of rescue to the beleaguered daughters of England, of bringing the relief to Lucknow in person. He offered to take her in his motor, but she was not yet steeled to such excursions, and, seeing her embarrassment, he had a happy thought.

"Perhaps you like better to go by Herr Vinsor's car."

"Oh yes!" Dimny cried. "That is—if you don't mind."

"I am most happy to do such a nize youngk man a favor. *Glückliche Reise!*"

"I beg your pardon."

"I vish you a gladly chourney."

"Oh, thank you!"

He provided the passes, and nothing could have been more benevolent than his gracious God-speed.

The first convent they were to visit lay to the northwest of Brussels, just beyond Termonde. Here they were plunged again into the hideous path of the Iron Broom.

Noll drove his car past gutted buildings standing like huge fragments of empty nutshells, and on out to the Convent of the Ladies of St. Elisabeth, which had been overlooked somehow in the broom-work.

Dimny rang the bell at a little door. A lay sister looked out from above in terror. She had reason for terror. She had been one of a group of five women and girls whom the German troops had driven ahead of them



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as a screen against the Belgian fire. She motioned Dimny to another door. The porteress admitted her and left her in a cell of a reception-room while she fetched the Sister Superior.

Sœur Jeanne was a matronly little body despite her habit of a *réligieuse*, and sharp eyes snapped behind her spectacles. She was used to managing her little walled city with authority and she had faced a German brute with calm, but when Dimny explained what she had come to do, Sœur Jeanne went into a flutter.

The thought of taking her girls out into the world again gave her the emotions of an old-maid hen who has raised a little gang of ducklings only to see them decoyed toward a wide and fatal pond.

Dimny pacified her by describing the sufferings of the mothers in England. Melted at last, Sœur Jeanne consented to let Dimny place the matter before the girls themselves.

She led Dimny down a long, whitewashed tunnel across a snow-invested frozen garden into a room where a little throng was studying under the care of various pallid nuns. In this white, white refuge girls studied and nuns taught as people had done in the ancient Belgium of a few months back. Even the rumor of battle had apparently not reached this war-proof island.

The demure inhabitants rolled their eyes as pupils do when a visitor comes to school, but they made no stir. As the Sister Superior explained that Miss Parcot was from America there was a vibration of interest. Dimny made a little recitation as timidly as if it were her first appearance on a platform.

"I don't know what to say," she began. She could tell by the puzzled brows of the majority that her words were foreign to nearly all of the girls, but a few perked greedy ears at the beloved language.

"You see, when I was in England, I met a mother who asked me to try to get her daughter and other mothers' daughters back."

Two or three girls who withstood "England" could not stand the word "mother." They broke into sobs. The



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other girls tried to comfort them. There was a little panic which Dimny stampeded completely by calling out:

"I have brought permission to send you home."

That last word shattered the courage of all of them. Six English girls leaped to their feet, gasping with unbelief. They crowded forward, while Dimny explained as best she could, answering all questions and none.

One girl flung her arms about Dimny and wept gorgeously, filling Dimny's narrow bosom with the most maternal emotions—Sœur Jeanne's also. Though she stood frowning at the scene, she was trying to scare back the tears sliding across her cheeks as if her eyes were telling the beads of mercy.

Dimny explained that it would be necessary to have the photograph of each girl taken for her passport. Sœur Jeanne thought this an unnecessary vanity, but Dimny had only to say, "von Bissing's orders," to convince her. She promised that by the morrow all the papers would be complete, and the hand-baggage ready, so that they could be whisked across the frontier before the Germans could change their minds.

When Dimny rejoined Noll she felt like a successful angel out paying afternoon calls. On the flight back to Brussels she told Noll that he should have the privilege of taking the first load of girls into Holland.

He had to make the trip with the mail, in any case. So the next morning early, Noll ran out to Termonde and took aboard his cargo. There was some delay in packing both girls and baggage in the available space, but he returned to Brussels without losing any of either.

Dimny was at the office of the C. R. B. when he stopped there for the mail-pouch. When she saw him among his bevy of chattering magpies, she said, with laughter:

"I'm showing an awful lot of confidence in you to trust you with so many pretty girls."

He gave such a start at this that she realized how much more her words implied than she had meant. Then she blushed in her turn, and when at length he drove away, though he gave her a farewell look like a vow of loyalty, she felt a strange pang of uneasiness.



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Skelton brought her back to Brussels at once when he said:

"I hope to God he gets through with all those kids."

"There isn't any danger, is there?"

"Danger? Who's safe under the German flag?"

"But they have passports and everything."

"Yes, and so did the English nurses we tried to get back to England from Mons. They were captured there, taking care of wounded British soldiers. We got permission and passports to ship them home, but our courier couldn't protect them from vile language. The Germans arrested him, too, and threw the nurses into cells with the lowest criminals. We protested and got them out finally, but the adjutant shook his fist in the face of one of the nurses, and threatened them all with everything he could think of. They kept one nurse in a cell for weeks. Those poor school-girls would be mighty fascinating for some of these field-gray hyenas."

Noll's passengers were as loquacious as a cage of parrots. He could not frighten them quiet, but luck was with them until they passed in good season the frontier at Esschen and came under the sway of Holland's red, white and blue banner.

As Noll left behind the prison province of Belgium he remembered Dimny's anxiety about Vrouw Weenix. She had told him of Klemm's assurance that the peasant woman had been set free. He remembered the cottage; she had pointed it out to him on their way into Belgium. He drew up there now to make inquiry.

The place was filled with refugees who had found in the abandoned home a shelter from the winter. When Noll knocked at the door and asked for Vrouw Weenix an emaciated old woman told him that Vrouw Weenix was dead—shot by the Germans, buried in a pit in Esschen.

Noll was not yet so used to tragedies as to be indifferent to the destruction of this one more field-mouse in the claws of the black eagle.

The school-girls found Noll an unaccountably surly companion. They were as glad to leave him at Rotterdam as he



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to be quit of their responsibility. When he turned them over to other guardians he had no imagination to follow them across the Channel to their blissful reunions with their families, nor to imagine the rapture of the German girls exchanged for them, girl for girl, the lucky chosen ones weeping with incredulous joy, the deferred ones weeping with homesick anxiety lest the next quota of English girls might not get past the barrier. They knew their German fathers, those German daughters from the *Heimat* of *Magda*.

Noll begged for permission to return at once to Brussels, but it was impossible for him to get his messages ready till the third day. Three batches of English girls came in by train from Brussels before he could leave Rotterdam, and on the return trip he passed two more motor-loads of them in the C. R. B. cars.

He nearly burned out his engine in his haste, but he delivered his mail-bag and flew to the Palace Hotel.

He asked for Colonel Klemm first. The German attendant explained that the *Herr Oberstleutnant* had left Brussels an hour before in his car.

Noll asked for Miss Parcot. The attendant grinned.

"She left an hour ago in the car of the *Herr Oberstleutnant*."

Noll was thunderstruck. He stammered: "Where did they go? When do they come back?"

"They did not say."

Noll's fist ached to destroy the leer on that hateful face, but his terror for Dimny unmanned him.

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## CHAPTER XXXV

THE first distressing symptom of true love is distrust, for jealousy is a mixture of suspicion and of humility.

That was what ailed Dimny when she appeared at the C. R. B. in great anxiety and assailed Skelton with a new problem:

"I'm worried because Noll isn't back. Won't you please telegraph and ask if he's safe?"

"Oh, the Germans won't harm him," lied Skelton.

"There are other dangers than Germans," said Dimny, but did not explain that she was thinking of those English girls Noll had taken to Holland. Skelton did not understand her jealousy any more than she did. He guessed:

"He's probably very busy."

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Dimny, and said no more, but went on wondering why she worried.

In three days of zealous endeavor Dimny saw all the girls exported except Miss Curfey, the one she had been most eager to retrieve. She urged Klemm to redouble his efforts. The thwarted Christmas spirit had seemed to come to Dimny belatedly, with the spy Klemm posing as Kriss Kringle. Suspect him as she might—as she must—she could not deny his prodigies of achievement in discovering the English girls and sending them home to a holiday all the dearer for being delayed.

These largesses of rapture in a cruel time meant hardly more to Klemm than looking up a few names in a big directory and making out a few passports; but he went at the task with a will.

His own motive was partly to show old von Bissing that he could accomplish the possible if not the impossible; partly to please Dimny, who fascinated him increasingly as a problem and as an unconscious siren. Her



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very innocence of manner goaded his suspicions. He was not used to the American type of girl whose self-respect is a better chaperon than any mischief-making duenna. Dimny tantalized him with an indifference to the conventions which was devoid of any inclination to take illicit advantage of her liberties.

She kept the spies he set on her track standing out in the cold, while she worked in the charity-shops, feeding little school-children or young mothers. It was peculiarly harrowing to a grown-up cynical spy to stand out in the snow acquiring no information except as to the distressfulness of chilblains while the alleged criminal labored at errands of mercy. If Dimny had any work to do as a spy, she was plainly taking her time about getting at it—trying to wear her shadows out, no doubt. She was plainly making many friends among the Belgians, and that in itself was almost seditious.

Klemm had not yet received the copy of her letter in the files at 70 Königgrätzerstrasse. He telegraphed again and learned that the copy had been burned in a train set on fire by a British aviator; another copy was to be forwarded. In the meanwhile Klemm's only recourse was to pretend to be off his guard, in the hope of surprising Dimny off hers. And so he made friends with her as best he could. This was not difficult, since she was eager to be grateful and she delighted his every sense.

Klemm made himself extraordinarily agreeable. He had studied Dimny's prejudices, and he played on her sympathies. He tossed candies to Belgian children. He showed delicate courtesies to the English girls and to the nuns who dreaded to let them go. Some of the nuns were dilatory about securing the necessary photographs. They frankly distrusted German promises. But Klemm was all patience. When a Mother Superior protested that it took too long to get the girls' pictures taken, Klemm reminded her of the numerous camera-shops that advertised "*Pass Photographien in zwei Minuten.*"

He praised America. He forbore to alarm Dimny with further reference to the time when she had been in his arms, as he supposed. A dozen times she resolved to con-



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fess that she was not her sister and appeal to the new heart he had revealed. But still she postponed the confession.

Meanwhile Klemm flattered himself that her courtesy to him was something more than gratitude. He was sure that at least she was flirting with him. He felt that her heart was ripe for plucking, but he was afraid to make any mistake within the parish of Brussels. He resolved to coax her to some region beyond that influence.

At this time the C. R. B. was just beginning to respond to the desperate hunger-crisis in the occupied portions of France. It had not yet taken over and organized the feeding of these millions of lonely, hungry ones, as it did later. So Klemm told Dimny that he had found Miss Curfey in the French war zone, but that the nuns had refused to let her go with Klemm on his own recognizance. He asked Dimny to try her persuasive powers. With her to vouch for him, Miss Curfey would doubtless be surrendered at once. She could then be brought back to Brussels without delay.

Dimny suggested waiting for the return of Noll Winsor, but Klemm protested that at any moment von Bissing might revoke his permission. He promised to have Dimny back in Brussels before Herr Vinsor arrived, since the French war-front was not far away by automobile standards.

Dimny was eager to find Miss Curfey and finish her task. She consented. They left Brussels a few hours before Noll came tearing in.

Klemm drove his big military car, and Dimny sat by his side. The speed created a gale, and it was knifing cold. Dimny shivered miserably in spite of her heavy coat, till Klemm stopped the car, got down, and opening a military trunk strapped to the rack, took forth an overcoat of the regulation field gray, with a deep collar of brown fur. He offered it to Dimny. She declined. He pleaded. She yielded.

As her arms slipped into the great sleeves, he squeezed her shoulders with a gentle pressure that did not last long enough to be rebuked, but only long enough to alarm her.



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He could tell by her startled look that his caresses were not welcome—not yet, he told himself.

Before he closed his trunk he had an inspiration. His helmet was there. He thought how quaintly it would become the beauty of his passenger. He held it up to her with a milliner's gesture.

"If you should wear this nize bonnet—"

She waved it away with scorn.

He persisted: "If you should wear this nize bonnet, and keep the collar of those overcoat toorned up, you look like an offitser."

She shook her head. She did not care to look like a German officer.

He continued: "The soldiers ve pass should not make such a staringk. Ve do not have to stop so much. Ve get back by Brüssel qvicker."

That was an argument she could not withstand. She whipped off her motor-cap, lifted the helmet high with a coronation sweep and lowered it to her head. Then she pushed her hair up under it and automatically reached for a hatpin. She laughed at herself when she realized the futility of trying to thrust a hatpin through a helmet, especially as she had no hatpin.

Klemm fastened his trunk and returned to the wheel. He felt that he was getting somewhere at last. Dimny looked more exquisite than ever in her war-bonnet, and she seemed to enjoy it.

The zest of the adventure was irresistible. She learned the thrill of being saluted by the sentinels they whizzed past, and once when they met a detachment of troops, the officer in command saluted her by shouting "*Auf!*"—whereupon the soldiers saluted her by performing the goose-step of ceremony, and turning their eyes to the left.

"They theenk ve are some Cherman chenerals. If ve go slower, they should see you do not look like some chenerals, *Gott sei Dank!* but like the daughter of the Kaiser when she vas a colonel of a regiment."

From a crossroad came hooting a huge gray car driven with a rage of speed that suggested a comet's catastrophic rush. Dimny caught a scared glimpse of a lank individual



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with a peculiarly fox-like face, under a military cap tilted to one ear, a gangling body of wilted bamboo in a lazy attitude, for all his haste. At his side sat a young soldier who threw a glance of wrath at Klemm for nearly being killed. But the driver, the personification of flippancy, went his way like a clown on a meteor, leaving it to Klemm to take care of himself, although Klemm's disaster would have meant his own.

Dimny was angrier than she was afraid. She cried: "That idiot must be insane! What asylum is he escaping from?"

As Klemm swung the car back into the road from the ditch, he gasped:

"Dat eediot is de Crown Prince himself. You should not say he is eensane."

He seemed to be more shaken by her blasphemy than by the graze with death. Dimny laughed at his horror.

"Well, he scared you, too!"

Klemm protested: "I am not scared for me, but for him. If he ditt hit me and kill me and bruise or break himself, oh, how sorry I should be—and ashamed!"

To Dimny, the American, this absolute reverence for a human being, even an heir to a throne, was as incomprehensible as any other voodoo-worship. But she saw almost for the first time sincerity in Klemm's eyes. She realized that for all his cynicism toward the virtues she revered, he was an abject savage in his adoration of the ruling family of Prussia. He believed literally the Kaiser's frequent advertisements of the Hohenzollerns as the old-established, one and only reliable Holy Family, purveyors by special appointment to the heavenly court.

It was that bewildering mixture of primeval fetish-worship and scientific to-morrowism that made the Germans so dangerous.

Dimny did not speak for a long time; nor did Klemm. Miles went by, the usual miles of the region, every prospect revealing by its present misery how beautiful it once had been. Forests were splintered, fields pocked with shell, lowly homes blasted and smashed, villages bowled over.

The people here in France had been treated, if possible,



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a little more ruthlessly than in Belgium. The men of military age had all been taken into the army at the first mobilization. The weak and aged males alone remained, unable to protect their womankind at all. The whim of the conqueror was their judgment-seat, and such villainy flourished as history has hardly ever known. It was said later, with an exaggeration hardly emphasizing the hideous truth, that "every woman who could have a child had one"; and the provisions for this army of Franco-German bastards became one of the national problems.

On one horizon there was a vast pile of wreckage, of blunted and toppled gables, of gouged and truncated turrets, of tiles spilled along crooked roofs, of sooty caverns that had been windows, of splintered columns and collapsed stairways, of fountains choked with ashes and statues fallen among cinders. The sight of it doomed the whole region to ugliness. It was as harsh as the note of a raven eternally croaking despair.

When the car approached on the twisting road, the château made a sort of transit across the sun, in whose dazzling rays it seemed to be suddenly restored to glory. Dimny could almost see how superbly the stately residence had once enriched its horizons, the turrets suave of curve, the gables nice of angle, the mullioned windows the very blossoms of marble, the stairways phrases of welcome, the fountains musical, the statues serene. This home had kept for centuries a festival of beauty, of grace, of luxury, of hospitality aglow upon this scene; for even the distant view of a beautiful home is itself a kind of hospitality, a comforting and cheering hail to the wayfarer. All that the château had ever chanted to hearten the countryside was altered now to a doleful warning. It said: "If you seek the monument of German *Kultur*, look about you."

The car swerved; the sun retreated to a post whence the light cruelly exposed the shame of the ruined mansion as one might whip the last cloak from a stark old crone whose beauty in youth had been sung. So this building grieved in a huddle like *la belle* Heaulmière naked in her senility.

The massacre of these homes, these churches, seemed



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to Dimny, as to all the un-German world, an atrocity so depressing that only one other atrocity could surpass it, and that was the threat of the Germans to restore with their own hands the ruins after the war. The dread of that ultimate vandalism put new determination into all artistic souls to resist to the last.

The car sped on until at length the road drew toward a château whose magnificence was still unscathed. The grounds about it were filled with soldiers. As Dimny and Klemm approached the gate, they saw the car that had borne the Crown Prince past them, just moving on.

The guard of honor finished its salute, and a throng of officers broke up and hurried to the steps of the château. Klemm regretted his tardiness, and he explained to Dimny that she had narrowly escaped the tremendous privilege of presentation to the next Kaiser. She did not regret the escape, and she begged him not to pause, but she could not leap from the car as it swung in at the gate and rolled up to the steps.

Klemm conducted her into a royal hall and thence into a vast salon. The painted romances on the ceiling, the ecstatic decorations among the panels and the mirrors in the walls, were all of France in her most gorgeous phase, but the inhabitants of the room were of the Germans German to the last degree.

On divans dressed in exquisite silks sprawled uniformed Huns. Chairs delicate as fans upheld big feet booted and spurred. Helmets with foppishly long spikes hung on the heads of carved nymphs at the mantelpieces. An officer was knocking the ashes from a pipe on the dimpled elbow of a dryad all rosy from the flames leaping in a great fireplace; another was tipsily brandishing a saber and trying to clip the ears from a marble bust of a satyr without damage to its smile. He was not succeeding.

Card-players were smacking their cards down on tables of onyx and ormolu. Champagne-bottles were everywhere, shattered in the fireplace, rolling emptily about the floor or firing off their corks in the hands of private soldiers acting as servants.

Dimny fell back from the door as Klemm drew her



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back. He was not proud of the scene. He led her across the hall to another salon where there were fewer officers and they more sober. There were only a few champagne-bottles here, and all erect.

The officers paid no heed to Klemm till he saluted an elderly man and begged to present to him an ambassadress from America. This shook the old general to his feet, and all his staff with him.

Dimny might have been far less young and winsome and still have delighted the eyes of these warriors. General von Spahn was fatherly in his greeting, and he laughed amiably at Dimny's uniform. He waved his hand to the other officers, introducing them *en masse*, but each of them had to come forward, clap his heels together, break at the waist and bow himself into a rigid right angle, straighten up, pronounce his name and title, right-angle again and back off.

General von Spahn was cordial to Dimny because, as he explained, several of his friends had American wives who were more loyal to Germany than the Germans. He implied with an old man's humor that some of his younger officers were willing to enlist another pretty *Amerikanerin*, at which the other officers laughed and snickered with a little more than the usual amusement of younger officers at older officers' jokes. For many years rich American wives had been furnishing impoverished Prussian guardsmen with the money necessary to their careers. The competition was keen, and the officers were called dollar-chasers (*Dollar-jäger*). The General's suggestion put a new and thrilling idea into Klemm's head.

Klemm explained that he was conducting Fräulein Parcot on a mission for General Freiherr von Bissing and had stopped to ask for a little rest and refreshment. General von Spahn escorted them to his own quarters in the music-room of the château and said he would be glad to give them what poor food a soldier's life afforded. He begged to be excused from joining them, as an important council was on, but he excused a few of his younger officers to keep them company. Klemm urged them not to neglect their business, but they laughed, and followed the *Dollarjagd*.



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Klemm drank with a zeal that alarmed Dimny, but he grew very gentle therewith. He was of that dour type which is subnormal in temperature and remains cynical and harsh of soul until the flame of alcohol has warmed him up and stirred to life hidden courtesies and suppressed genialities. As he grew more loquacious the other officers gave up the effort at competition and withdrew, bowing and snapping back to position, kissing Dimny's hand and murmuring compliments. Klemm made no secret of his ability to endure their absence.

There was a piano in the room, its enameled surface decorated with scenes from Grétry's operas by some French artist of joyous brush. Klemm began to feel music bubbling in his effervescing soul. He wanted to sing. The wine had not so much made him boastful as it had removed the check on his frank delight in his own gifts.

Dimny begged him to resume the journey at once, but he was jovially stubborn. He told Dimny that he was a "goot zingker," and he felt sure that she also had a "sveet woice." He pleaded with her to sing, but she had no song in her heart. Her hands ached, however, to try the piano.

She had not touched one since she left California, and her fingers were as restive as colts kept stabled.

She began as timidly as the first twittering of a bird beginning its aubade. Soon she forgot sorrow and the world's wrack and returned for a while to the golden era when melody and harmony were things of importance.

Then her soul remembered and grew abysmally sad. Glittering arpeggios subsided into dissonances bitter with gall. Music that cannot describe an incident, announce a date or speak a name, can give to grief and woe and love and longing their perfect utterance. It cannot deal with facts, but it relates the very essence of truth. The piano seemed to say for Dimny all that words could not, the grief within grief.

Klemm applauded discreetly at first and lavished compliments that Dimny did not hear. But at length he grew impatient to be singing. He searched among the books and loose leaves of music he had found. He threw aside with a sniff the native masterpieces of the French,



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whose musical art the Germans had always overborne with their more ponderous accomplishments. For the genius of D'Indy, Debussy, Ravel, and Hahn he had no ear, but he rejoiced noisily when he found two or three albums of German songs published with French translations in the millennial period before the war, before the hate of nation for nation had extended to their dead and living arts.

Placing a volume of Schumann on the music-rack, Klemm announced:

"I am now goingk zingk. You play goot *Begleitung*, yes? I am sure."

Dimny shook her head, but when her eyes fell on the page, her fingers entered the accompaniment and Klemm knew that she could be a perfect adjutant. His voice broke into song. It was a trifle husky with disuse and abuse, but he read with an intelligence and a training that could not be despised.

A more treasonable, strategical and spoils-hunting knave than Klemm could hardly have been conceived. He made duplicity and cruelty his religion, his art, his career; and yet his musical soul was child-like and bland. It lifted Dimny from her gloom and made her turn her face from him lest he see her smiling while he sang with all the innocence of a young lover Schumann's tender music to Rückert's cozy lyric, "*Aus den östlichen Rosen.*"

She smiled as accompanists do, in the concealment of their back hair, but when Klemm selected the "*Frühlingsnacht*" for his unsolicited encore, she forgot him in the shimmering rhapsody of the piano-part. She did not heed the words of triumph that meant so much to him, singing down at her as his possession. "The moon, the stars are replying to the dreaming groves of pine. And the nightingales are crying, 'She is thine, she is thine!'"

Dimny thought only of spring nights filled with garden aroma, flights of birds, moon-glory and star-splendor, of rustling thickets and nightingales beating the air with song. The fierce exultant swoop of the winged chords drowned even Klemm's voice in a frenzy of joy. It was good to be young; it was a duty to love; spring must soon come again as it had always come again. Why else should



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it go but that it might enter anew with its eternal unbelievable beauty? She thought of Noll Winsor and played to him with a fearless frankness, seeing that he was as far away as spring.

Klemm left her to her anguish of joy, while he searched long and fretfully for another lyric. In a perplexity of choices, he chose at last the one he least desired, the sardonic spring-song that Hugo Wolf made of the wail of a poor human jailbird.

It left Dimny with her music-rapture exhausted. But Klemm was not yet sung out, and he set her another task, Jensen's "Marie," the song of the girl sitting by her flowers at the window in such peace and purity that the wanderer going by lifts his heart in prayer:

"Oh, may no storm your flowers break,
Nor yet your heart, Marie!"

Dimny struck the last chords in a reverie. She had known and loved German music well, and the stories of the makers of that music: Bach the family-man, the tender Mozart, quaint old Papa Haydn, the tormented Beethoven, sunny-hearted Gluck, Schumann the perfect lover, Schubert the timid songster, kindly old Franz, all with their harmonies welling up in spite of their poverties, blindness, deafness, madness. Hugo Wolf had killed himself, and Schumann had tried to. They were all men of sorrows, and a learned tenderness marked them all and made their music supreme.

But since this war the supreme expression of the German soul seemed to be an inexhaustible cruelty, a deafness to the cries of victims or to the protest of the world aghast. Which way lay the truth? Were the composers and the *Lieder*-wreathers vile hypocrites, weepers of melodious crocodile tears, or had these latter-day devils betrayed the old Germany?

Could it be the same race whose poets were moved to prayer by the vision of innocent girlhood and whose soldiers were moved to lust by the same vision? Could a nation plead with God to spare the flowers and the heart of a maiden and later give God the praise for the triumph



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over Belgium, and then bayonet and outrage Flemish women, make harlots of the captured French, drag from Lille its girlhood into slavery, doom Poland to famine and withhold all remonstrance from the Turks who sought to obliterate the Armenian millions?

What kind of flesh and blood could they be made of, these Germans? Or were they mere every-day people who had been kept in an evil school too long, poisoned from childhood with a religion of loyalty to a dynasty ashamed of nothing but its failure to crush the world under its dominion?

She thought of the assassinated nations, all Europe bleeding, moaning, starving in its shattered homestead, of France pouring out its lives along its ragged frontiers, of her own sister and mother, of ruin and wailing everywhere. And she cried out to Klemm:

"What has happened to you Germans? What are you trying to do to this poor world? Who can ever listen to your music again without remembering Belgium? Who can ever believe another German love-song? What will your women think of you when you go home?"

Klemm came down from the clouds in a fuddle, mumbling: "*Bitte? Was haben Sie, dann? Sind Sie böse auf mich?* You don't like it, my zingkink? No?"

"I don't like you or anything you do," she cried, in a growing frenzy. "I want you to take me away this minute!"

He was humbled at her failure to approve his voice, and he grew meek.

"I come; ve go find Mees Curfey right avay."

"Take me first to my sister."

"Your sister? You have den a sister. Who is she?"

"The sister you took me for. The sister you mistreated. The sister you said you held in your arms."

His very eyes gaped at her. "You are not your sister?"

"No!"

"Den who you are?" he thundered.

"I am myself. I am an American. I came for my sister, and you know where she is. Take me to her, or I'll—I'll—"



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She could find nothing to threaten him with. The wrongs she had suffered were so monstrous, her hands were so empty of weapons, her nation was so far away and so devoid of power, that she choked with a loathing of the world as it was.

Klemm's look of stupidity changed to malignance.

"So! You did make lies to me. You would have me to the fools! So!"

He was smothered with rage at his own blunder. He was silenced by the difficulty of finding any punishment severe enough. He sank into a chair and glowered at her while he pondered.

And Dimny sat in a stupor of remorse at her fatal outburst. She had withheld the secret only to disclose it at the worst of all times. She called herself fool and knave, and told herself that somebody ought to kill her as a useless cumberer of the ground.

And somebody almost did. Thunderbolts came from the sky.

For the clamorous silences of the room were broken by the sound of cannon-fire. Shouts were heard; the floors were shaken by the trample of running feet. Klemm went to the window and glanced out. He saw that officers and soldiers were scanning the clouds. Anti-aircraft guns were bombarding the heavens.

It was a commonplace with him, and it was none of his business to fight the hostile French vultures. He went back to his chair to consider his own problem. Dimny ran to the window and tried to peer up at the intruder upon the German skies. She could see nothing, though she could tell by the pointing fingers and the turning heads of the throngs outside which way the airship went.

But the bird afloat above was not killed by any of the marksmen beneath. It dropped bombs instead. One of them came smashing, crashing, rending, roaring, through the roof and through ceiling after ceiling into the music-room. Fragments of shell, an avalanche of timbers and a whirlwind of plaster and splinters filled the air.

Dimny was knocked down—killed, she thought, in the hurtle of death, but she came back from oblivion to find



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Dimny ripped open the collar of the wretch's tunic, and groped about his throat till she felt the pumping throb of a great artery. There she pressed her thumb with all her might. And the blood jumped no more from the remnant of his arm.

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herself alive and unhurt among the ruins. Her wits came back slowly as she watched the slow subsidence of the dust in the air, the uneasy movements of crisscrossed joists.

She cried out at the ruins about her. Then she saw that a man lay still on the floor—yet not entirely still, for from his mangled side blood was jetting in red blurts.

She recognized Klemm, and common humanity overcame her dread. She rose and stumbled toward him, shuddering at his hideous estate and wondering what to do. She cried for help, but the guns were still aroar. She tried to recall the principles of first-aid that she had studied and forgotten again and again.

One thing was certain. She must stop that squandering of blood at once. She saw that most of his left arm was gone. She almost fainted when she saw it lying in a chair across the room.

She gritted her teeth against the panic of her faculties. She gritted all her muscles, and compelled them to their tasks. And then a picture from an emergency book came back to her.

She ripped open the collar of the wretch's tunic, and groped about his throat till she felt the pumping throb of a great artery. There she pressed her thumb with all her might. And the blood jumped no more from the remnant of his arm.

She held one hand there while with the other she pushed aside a broken beam that pinioned his right arm. She brushed the plaster-dust from his eyes and nostrils, and she waited for some one to come to the rescue.



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## CHAPTER XXXVI

WHEN he learned that Dimny had left the hotel Noll's mind ran everywhere and got nowhere with the swift futility of a squirrel in a wheel.

His love cried out that Dimny had been kidnapped and was suffering Heaven only knew what fate. He could make no guess which way to pursue. She had been gone more than an hour. In that time she could be forty or fifty miles along any one of the roads radiating from Brussels. How could he follow without knowing which road to choose?

He spent a night of tormented anxiety. The next morning, incapable of waiting longer, Noll took the C. R. B. car and set out on a hunt at random. The first four-corners stopped him.

In his confusion he remembered that Klemm had told him of Nazi Duhr's presence in Louvain. There was no certainty as to the length of his regiment's stay there. Noll had promised his mother that he would look up his cousin. Now was his chance to keep the promise. Nazi might know something of Dimny's people.

For lack of any other impulse, Noll turned his car toward Louvain. At least it was some place to go, something definite to attempt. At the *Kommandantur* in Louvain he learned where his cousin was billeted, and, leaving his car at headquarters—at the firm suggestion of headquarters—he found his way to the residence honored by the compulsory guest.

As he was about to knock at the door a gaunt, hollow-eyed, hypochondriacal officer came out.

Remembering the pink cheeks and thick red lips and



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baby-faced beauty that had marked Nazi when he visited Noll's mother at Carthage, Noll had no suspicion that this woebegone scarecrow in uniform could be his cousin. The officer spoke in a dismal tone:

"*Zu wem wollen Sie?*"

"*Ich möchte Leutnant Duhr sprechen.*"

"*Ich bin es.*"

"*Du lieber Himmel!*"

Nazi scowled at this, and Noll made haste to explain who he was. Nazi was incredulous. Slowly he recognized Noll. He expressed great delight verbally in the meeting, but his spirit was broken and he was incapable of his old exuberance. He was war-worn and discouraged. He had hardly strength enough for curiosity as to Noll's motives in coming to Belgium.

Noll asked how Nazi's mother was and if she had got the money, and Nazi said that she was well and she had; and how was Noll's mother, and that was good, and to give her his greetings when he went back.

Noll said he hoped Nazi's mother was not still hungry, and Nazi said that everybody in Germany was hungry and that it was hoped the war would be over soon before everybody starved.

He looked about him cautiously and used Klemm's very words: "*Haben Sie Lust spazieren zu gehen?*"

Noll assented, and Nazi guided him toward the more deserted ruins of the city while he poured out his wrath at the Prussians and at Kaiserdom and its deeds. He had been reading Liebknecht and Maximilian Harden and other German opponents of militarism just before the war broke. Noll had read some of their utterances, too, and they were to him a redemption of the German soul from the charge of complete barbarity. Yet at best they were the too few good men in Sodom who were not enough to save the city from damnation. And he knew that in time of war the author whom the enemy reads with most approval is not likely to have much popularity at home.

Nazi, however, was in a fury against the ruling powers and their work. Passing his colonel, he saluted him with great



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decision, but later snarled, "*Du militärisches Kultur-schwein!*"

Noll was glad enough to hear Nazi curse the Culture-hogs, but he was not much interested in the internal economy of the Empire, not much convinced by Nazi's prophecies of a great upheaval shortly to throw down the Teutonic tyrants.

"It will go through the soil of the Fatherland like a great plow," cried Nazi, "turning under the ground the high, gaudy weeds and bringing to the surface the deep, common clay."

"Also a lot of bugs and worms," said Noll, carelessly. He was wondering where Dimny was. That was more important to him than the political destinies of Germany. Thinking that she might have looked for Nazi in Louvain, he broke in on Nazi's flaming socialisms with a sudden:

"By the way, have you seen an American young lady named Parcot in Louvain?"

Nazi was dumfounded, and he startled Noll by the violence of his expression as he gasped:

"Yes—no—why—how did you find out?"

Noll assumed a look of profound information. He was startled by Nazi's manner. It must mean that some harm had befallen Dimny. So he said, sternly:

"Where is she now?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"She is waiting for me," Noll lied, glibly.

Nazi continued to quiver with excitement. He stared at Noll searchingly, and then he said:

"I will show you where she dwells."

Noll was puzzled by that word "dwells," but he said nothing and accompanied Nazi up the Rue des Joyeuses Entrées to the neighborhood of the home of the Tudesqs. Then Nazi grew afraid to venture into the presence of Alice, who had rebuffed him so sharply. He stopped and pointed to the house.

Noll could not understand Nazi's unwillingness to go farther, but he made the more haste to get to the door himself. As he raised his hand to knock, he glanced back



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and saw that Nazi had already vanished. He wondered what could have brought Dimny to this curious little shack made largely of scorched timbers and set up in the ruins of a burned home.

The door was opened by little Philothée Tudesq, who had grown by now to look as wise as a sixty-year-old lady condensed into child's size and clothes. Noll had been speaking German to Nazi, and now his first question was in German. He got only so far as "*Bitte, möchte ich—*" when the door was slammed in his face.

He was rather pleased than offended at the insult, and he took the hint. He knocked again and again, but the door was not opened till he called through in French that he was not German, but a friend. The door came ajar enough for one large eye to study him. He bent down and spoke to it.

"*Puis-je parler un moment avec Mademoiselle Parcot?*"

He was very proud of his French, but it was his bad pronunciation that commended him to Philothée, for she flung the door wide and shouted: "*Vous êtes Américain, n'est-ce pas, monsieur?*"

"Yes," said Noll.

"*Entrez, s'il vous plait,*" said Philothée, with a complete change of manner from contempt to homage, and she swept as long a bow as one could make who was built so close to the floor.

Then she became a child again and ran storming up the stairs, shrieking to "mademoiselle" that it had in it therebelow a beautiful young American monsieur who had demanded her. She was speedily hushed, but Noll could hear soft footsteps hurrying, doors opening and closing, the familiar evidences that an unexpected caller has caused a sensation up-stairs and that a whispered conference is in session.

At length he heard some one coming shyly down the rough stairs. He made ready to welcome Dimny royally. But it was not she who descended. It was a young woman, slow, heavy, frightened, reluctant. Noll saw no resemblance to his Dimny in either face or form, much less in carriage.



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She waited for him a long moment, then faltered in perfect English, "I am Miss Parcot."

"Oh, really? That's an odd coincidence. I was looking for Miss Dimny Parcot."

This name seemed to exert a startling effect. The other Miss Parcot wavered and staggered to a chair, sat down and gripped it as if she were afraid of slipping out of it to the floor. She gasped:

"Where have you seen her?"

"In Brussels a few days ago."

This news had an electric effect. The girl rose and ran to the stairway and stumbled up, crying:

"Mamma! Mamma! Dimny! Dimny is in Belgium!"

There were answering cries, and another woman appeared at the head of the steps and ran down babbling. The two met half-way and chattered together, staring at Noll, who understood at last that the lost were found.

The mother and sister came down to him, both talking at once. The Tudesqs, the mother and Philomène and Philothée, joined the throng. They did not understand the shrapnel-fire of questions and answers in English. They kept asking one another what was said and what it meant.

Noll told his wonder-story; but he spoke no word of Alice's letter to Dimny. He tried to pretend that he knew nothing of their martyrdom, and he tried to keep his eyes from any confession that he realized its cruel aftermath.

Alice and her mother wept and laughed. They tossed side-explanations to the Tudesqs in French and explained to Noll a little of the tragedies that had bound the two families together.

Mrs. Parcot began to ask where Dimny was, and Noll must now conceal his alarm as to her disappearance.

He said that being in Louvain and hearing of a Miss Parcot there, he assumed that Miss Dimny must have come down from Brussels, where she undoubtedly was. He urged them to go with him at once to meet her.

To his stupefaction his proposal was received rather with dismay than as the natural and only thing to do. Before he could solve this problem in his mind, another reason for the impossibility of his suggestion occurred to him.



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"You can't go to Brussels without a pass, and it might be hard to get one. I'll bring Dimny. It takes less than an hour to run up to Brussels, and if she's ready to start I'll be back during the afternoon."

They stared at him with an ox-eyed melancholy. They thanked him in a daze, and he left them.

Noll found his car and sent it flying to Brussels, assured that Dimny would be there.

But she was not there. And there was no news of her. He could not telegraph or telephone this to Louvain. He could only wait in a fever of all emotions, none of them endurable. His thoughts were whipped from one terror to another.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII

DIMNY, left alone with her shattered enemy in the ruined music-room, called again and again, but no heed was paid. Her thumb ached, and her arm was an agony of fatigue, but she held fast, for it came to her mind that if she let this poor villain die, his knowledge of her sister's whereabouts would perish with him. And so she crouched above him, grimly determined that he should not escape her so.

There the Germans found her when at last they ceased to fire at the vanishing airship and went to search the results of its work. General von Spahn gazed at her in wonder and asked her what she was at. When she explained with fierce anger and demanded a surgeon, he did not rebuke her, but gave her his praise.

The surgeon came and stared at Dimny with the amazement surgeons always feel for such of the laity as know the first thing about the human machine. He turned Klemm over to the assistant surgeon and took charge of Dimny himself.

She had need of help, but her collapse was the wholesome surrender of a bankrupt strength. She had no temptation to go back into that dreadful sleep. She felt as if she were cured, and she needed only an encouraging word as to Klemm's safety to perfect her slumbers. It takes a thunderbolt or an earthquake to cure some ailments.

The next morning Dimny found herself in a bed, a German Red Cross nurse in charge of her. She was treated as a heroine who had saved to the Fatherland an important officer. The nurse said that she must have German blood in her.

"Not in me, but on me," Dimny answered, and looked



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at her hands that had been so bedabbled when last she looked at them. They were white now. Blood washes off so easily.

She asked when she might see Colonel Klemm, and the nurse answered that he had asked for her, but the surgeon had told him not to speak or think for three days. He would certainly not be permitted to see any one for many more. Dimny cast up her eyes in despair.

The nurse smiled wisely. A romance was evidently in full bloom. She congratulated Colonel Klemm, she said, for winning the devotion of such a brave young beauty—one more recruit for *Kultur*.

Dimny smiled politely at the irony of this. Being such a heroine, she found little difficulty in gaining permission to return to Brussels. The reason she gave was the satisfactory one that her clothes were all there. Her request was forwarded to General von Spahn, who brought her in person her pass. He said that he would recommend her for an iron cross for her bravery and devotion. She had taken her place among the heroines of Germany and had outshone the American allies of the Fatherland.

Dimny bore up under this as best she could and accepted the tender of an official car to carry her to Brussels. The young officer who accompanied her made ardent love to her all the way, and she bore that also.

But it was not so easy to bear the look of reproach in the eyes of Noll Winsor, who was waiting for her when she entered the hotel. She got rid of her escort, who kissed her hands greedily.

Then she hurried to the reception-room to explain herself to Noll. He heard her story out, and love and trust rolled back into his heart in a flood of pride. He waited till she had finished her chronicles, and then he warned her to control herself when she heard his story.

He broke it to her gradually that he had found her mother and sister. She fought down the cries of joy as if she were battling with an overwhelming grief. She would listen to nothing but an immediate dash to Louvain. He was willing enough to be coerced, and the little C. R. B. car was a chariot of translation.



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They went flaming into the pitiful city with the sunset, and she was out of the car before he had stopped it in front of the Tudesq home. She ran to the door and beat upon it. Tiny Philothée opened it, and Dimny pressed into the dimly lighted hall, crying: "Mamma! Alice! Alice! Mamma!"

Madame Tudesq and Philomène came down the stairs in a flurry. To her frantic demands they could only answer:

"They have gone!"

"Where? Where?"

"God knows."

When Dimny realized that her mother and her sister had fled from the very news of her approach she was flung back to little-girlhood again. She stood suffocated with disappointment. Then her breath began to hurry, to shuttle into sobs. At first it was for herself that she felt so sorry, but she suddenly understood what had driven her mother away.

That immemorial modesty between parents and children forbade her to endure the eyes of her daughter. It had been bitter enough for her to face Alice, at first, and days had passed before they had accepted each other's glances. They had grown used to each other eventually. But Dimny was stranger than a stranger to them. They simply could not bear the encounter.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII

NOLL understood in a dim and helpless way, but he was still keeping up the pretense that he did not know their story. Dimny had not told him and would never tell him. In her daze she did not even consider whether he knew or not.

He left the house and ran to his car. Before he reached it, he had decided that the one place to go was to the German headquarters. For once he blessed the network of sentinels that would make escape almost impossible.

Yet he had hardly gone half-way to the *Kommandantur* before he understood that the network had only this first advantage—that it was far easier for the women to get into the toils than out. He realized that it might be a hard task to get them released to go back to the house, to say nothing of a return to Brussels. As for taking them out of Belgium into Holland—that would be like trying to climb out of hell.

And then he realized with peculiar vividness and horror how completely the Germans had changed the world. Their conquest had absolutely annulled all the familiar standards of life. The mighty claims of justice, mercy, personal privilege and American liberty meant just a little less than nothing. Nobody had any rights as rights, except the conqueror.

The only tests of an act were: does it advance or impede the imperial success? does it violate the grammar of military efficiency? If it did not and the conqueror was in an amiable mood, justice might be condoned. But to claim a right or a privilege as such would be regarded as a simple impertinence. Somehow this sacrilege seemed more infamous to Noll than all the other cruelties of Teutonism. The very air was tyranny.



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He wondered what excuse the women could have given for their outrageous effort to go where they pleased, to run the lines. The officer of the guard must have questioned them ruthlessly. And now Noll must approach him and haggle with him for their liberty.

He remembered Nazi Duhr. Nazi Duhr had been a loathsome villain, but he owed the women a debt and acknowledged it. Noll turned his car aside and ran it to Nazi's quarters, found him there and told him a little of the situation and asked his aid. But Nazi had been summoned for guard-duty. He had neither the time nor the courage to approach his superior officer with a *habeas corpus* for the two prisoners. He would only involve himself and accomplish nothing. He was plainly afraid to call his soul his own. The Germans had lost their rights as individuals, too.

Noll spurned Nazi as more hindrance than help and went on alone to beard the commandant. He found him at the Hôtel de Ville, which the vandals had spared for their own convenience in the scientific destruction that raged on the *Sturmnacht*. The prestige of Noll's authority as a courier of the C. R. B. gained him an audience.

He had no idea just what to say, but the commandant was in a whimsical mood and was amused to compliment Noll on the work of the C. R. B. in feeding Louvain. Noll, fishing for some reciprocal compliments, praised the excellent work the Germans had done in restoring Louvain. After a proper while of small-talk, Noll was inspired to a careless:

"By the way, I hope your guards have taken up two unfortunate women who escaped from their home."

The major had not heard of it. He sent an orderly to inquire. Noll filled the interim with diplomatic blarney on the perfection of the German system. The orderly came back to say that two women had indeed been brought in by a sentinel. They would not give an account of themselves.

Noll tapped his head significantly and pleaded: "Major, they should not have been permitted to escape. They ought not to be left in a cell all night. They may grow



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noisy. Commit them to my care. I'll go bail for them, take them off your hands and restore them to their home."

The major reluctantly consented and gave Noll passes for the two women. Noll hurried down into the cell block and confronted them in forlorn estate. They were so terrified at being in the clutches of the soldiery again that they welcomed him with all the joy their wretched souls were capable of.

When, however, he asked them to go back to the house with him, they shook their heads.

"But you can't stay here forever," he urged. "What do you want to do?"

"I want to die," the mother groaned.

"And so do I," said Alice.

Noll stared at them in amazement and unconsciously plagiarized from Epaminondas when he groaned, "O my God, to think that in days like these when every man and woman is so desperately needed anybody could be found with time and selfishness enough to die."

"But the world is such a hateful place; there is so much sorrow," Alice sighed.

"Of course, of course," Noll pleaded, more for Dimny's sake than the world's. "But don't you know the old poem of the two nuns who saw how sad the world was, and one of them sank down and wept with sympathy, but the other one laughed and worked because the world needed help and comfort?"

He mixed his quotation hopelessly, but it served to rouse a little interest in those jaded hearts, enough at least for a protesting question:

"But what could we do?"

"There are a thousand things to do right here in Louvain, and ten thousand in Brussels. There are children starving and freezing, and mothers and old crippled men and wounded workmen and overworked ladies trying to do more than they can. You can ladle out soup, and make bread or cut it up and distribute it. You can make clothes, can't you?"

Their eyes brightened a little at this, but he jumped to his real argument:



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"And first of all, you can mend the broken heart of your daughter."

That went home. Mrs. Parcot moaned: "We ran away from her to spare her. It would kill her to see us now."

"Kill her to see you? Hasn't she hunted the world over for you? Has she anything else on earth to live for? Haven't I heard her crying all night long for you?"

They began to cry for her. They had wept well and long for Dimny when she had been as one beautifully dead. But now she had become alive again. She was in the same town, eager, real. She had come down into the pit to find them. She had defied or wheedled the keepers of the gates or had sung her way through. She was in hell beckoning to them to return to the upper air.

There was no resisting this vision of her. They argued no more, but clamored to be taken immediately home. The little shack of the Tudesqs had earned from them that name. As Noll hurried them past the sentinels they were showering questions—silly, loving, lovable queries: "Is she well? Has she changed? Is she pretty yet? Does she know we ran away? When did she get to Belgium?"

They forgot even to wonder who Noll was or to ask him how he came to know Dimny and how well he knew her. The condemned suddenly released are not interested much in the turnkey who unlocks the cell door or the messenger who brings the reprieve.

Arriving at the Tudesq home, Noll helped them out with care and watched them hurry to the familiar door. He did not follow them. He saw that the door was already opened. He heard Dimny cry out in an anguish of welcome. He saw a smother of embraces and a struggle of love with love for its prey. The forgotten door stood ajar till the child Philothée appeared to close it. She saw Noll at the curb and motioned him in with a curling forefinger.

But he shook his head. She ran out and seized his hand and tugged at him. She understood that he was the real Santa Claus in this Christmas, and called him "*Le Petit Noël*," but he only knew he was out of place in that home.

He bent down and asked Philothée to tell her mother that he was going to put his car to bed for the night and



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find himself a hotel, and that he would "*venir ongcore don lah mattang.*"

Philothée made a guess at what tnat meant and watched him drive away. He was one American who had come to Louvain to some purpose. He was her first romance, her first *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*. And if ever there were knights errant of irreproachable chivalry, those young Americans who rode about Belgium in their thirty-Rosinante-power motors certainly belonged on the beadroll.

Noll, however, felt only that in solving the first great problem of the reunion of the Parcots he had made himself responsible for the solving of a multitude of new problems. He thanked God, though, that his Dimny had her people at last, and he fell asleep in his bed at the inn with a weary smile. He dreamed of his own mother thousands of miles away. He dreamed that she came into his room and tucked in the covers and kissed him softly to seal his slumbers.

He woke and sat up and reached out for her, murmuring drowsily the name he had used to call her by—"*Mütterchen*" —in those ancient times when German words of tenderness meant tenderness.

He wondered what had become of that vaguely remembered world where mother-sentinels were anxious to make sure that their sons slept warm, where people sang German songs and gave German toys to children.

He wondered drowsily whether the war were not merely a nightmare. He rose and ran shivering to the window to see if it were not Carthage outside and if the old trees were not asleep there along the front yard.

But he looked on a mourning wilderness of shattered homes and shops, a ruined cathedral, a tumbled library, sepulchers whited with moonlight.

He ran back to his sparse covers and shivered, trying to warm himself with the thought, "Praise God, it can't last much longer!" In a few days it would be February of 1915, and the war would have lasted for six horrible months.

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## CHAPTER XXXIX

THERE was little sleep that night in the home on the Rue des Joyeuses Entrées. But the street seemed to deserve its name again when it reunited that tortured family.

When Dimny was enfolded in her mother's arms and her sister's, and enfolded them in hers in a combat of vying devotions, the hallway was so dark that their embraces were almost ghostly. Their souls embraced with no help of the eyes. They crowded the narrow hall, all three talking at once, struggling and seizing again one from the other in a folly of joy, sobbing, then laughing, then both at once.

But when at length Madame Tudesq ventured to urge them to come into the living-room where there was a light, she threw a pall upon the carnival. Dimny's mother gasped:

"No, no, not in the light. I hate the light."

And then she fell to weeping madly. She dreaded the eyes of her daughter, she cowered before the thought of them as if she were herself a young girl coming home in shame to face her mother.

It was the daughter who must uphold the mother in this crisis. Dimny said what she could, but said most with inarticulate murmurs and the clenching of arms.

But they stood in the hall till Philomène was inspired to ask if she might borrow the lamp and took it to the kitchen.

Then the three found chairs, drew them close and sat with hands knit. There was a little charcoal-stove and it gave a certain glow upward and that sketched out as in red chalk on a black paper the outlines of beloved features, made tears glisten, and traced in crimson the curve of a



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tenderness in a smiling cheek and mouth. It dimly reacquainted them with one another.

And there they sat for hours telling their epics. Epics had been every-day affairs of late, for what, indeed, had Ulysses or Æneas to recount, or Andromache or Dido, more wonderful, more horrible than their history? Louvain was Troy and it fell. Dimny was farther-traveled than Odysseus or his son Telemachus that hunted for him. She had seen the Circe of ambition turn a whole nation into swine. Even now that her family was reunited, it had met in the perilous cave of the Cyclops. Scylla and Charybdis were yet to pass.

But the first adventures were finished. The fall of Louvain and the sack had been accomplished.

There remained the achievement of a return to Ithaca across the seas.

They wore themselves out with tragic gossip, and drowsiness oppressed them till no other pang of memory or prophesy equaled the pain of keeping awake.

Alice and her mother had occupied one bed in the little cabin of the Tudesqs. They were glad to make room for the slender Dimny. They did not want to be parted even in sleep.

Dimny lay between them and they rested as peacefully, as perfectly, as three recumbent figures on a tomb.

In the morning gray, Dimny woke and stirred and could not understand the ceiling nor the room at first. When she realized, she felt strangely happy. Then she saw her mother and sister plainly now for the first time. She studied them and saw what tribute experience had taken from the beauty they had had before. But they were more beautiful, somehow, now, wounded veterans ennobled by their defeat.

She could not help kissing their hands, her mother's drooping on her breast, and Alice's resting against her wan cheek.

The soft touch of her lips woke them. They stared and understood and hid their eyes beneath their arms and drew the sheet over their faces as if they gave themselves up for dead. But Dimny cried out against this repulse.



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"Don't hide from me. I've found you now. Don't run away again."

They looked into her eyes and saw that the scales had fallen from them. She had joined them outside Eden.

And that bitterness had such sweet, that sleep resumed its sway. They slept on and on, heedless of the noises in the street and in the house. And the Tudesqs tiptoed about, rejoicing in the silence of that room, knowing that they are not entirely cursed who can sleep.

They had not yet wakened when Noll drove up to the house in his car. Philothée came out stealthily with her fingers to her lips and told him to hush his automobile, for those ladies slept still.

When at last they woke they tried to make merry over their strait quarters and pretend to be at home in their Spartan regimen, with its breakfastless breakfast. Yet, while the novelty had gone from their reunion, their problems were as new as ever. They were marooned upon a coral reef. When Dimny spoke of going back to America, they shook their heads. She was appalled at this unforeseen obstacle. She said that they could argue it out in Brussels. They consented to go that far only because she threatened to leave them if they refused. They set about packing their few belongings while Noll was on his way to the *Kommandantur* to arrange for their traveling-papers. He had only to explain that Miss Parcot who had been so heroic in saving the life of the Herr Oberstleutnant Klemm had come to Belgium to find her mother and sister and had found them, but in poor health.

The officer gave his consent with much bowing and scraping, and the necessary papers of identity and permission to travel by the Louvain-Brussels road were made out with despatch.

Parting with the Tudesqs was a grievous task. Noll tried to ease the farewells by asking them to come to America, where they would be safe and happy. Mrs. Parcot could not forbear interposing:

"To America? Do you think we are going to America?"

"I did. Aren't you?"



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"Never! We shall come back to Louvain when the war is over—if we live. But to America—never!"

Noll did not attempt to debate this point. A look from Dimny cautioned him to silence. After many embraces, kisses, tears, the farewells were said and the car set out for Brussels. Little Philothée's shrill voice followed it shrilly.

"What's that she's singing," Noll asked, "the 'Marselyase'?"

"'The Stair-spengle Bennair,'" said Alice.

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## CHAPTER XL

WHEN Lieutenant-Colonel Klemm had first returned to consciousness after the bomb from the airship felled him he had found himself a howling wilderness of pains and confusions. It was a fearful shock to learn that one of his arms was gone and that he would join the ranks of the empty-sleeves, with his cuff pinned to his breast. The ghost of that arm would not leave him. It was like the spirit of a mother's dead baby whose head still makes her bosom ache.

His bewildered brain kept sending messages to that departed hand, those deserter fingers, the skilful agents that would never work for him again. Napoleon was calling for Grouchy's regiments to serve him at Waterloo, but these reinforcements would never come up. Klemm had lost a part of his machinery, a part of his equipment of soul, a part of himself.

Klemm had another torment. His memory vividly recalled the last hour with Dimny in the château, the song he had sung, her sudden reproach of German music, then the excitement over the visit of the hovering hostile man-bird and finally the coming of the world to an end in the crash of the bomb.

His nurse told him what she had been told of the heroism of the young American lady who had saved his life. The story grew, she added any number of picturesque details, among them a pretty poesy to the effect that the Kaiser would undoubtedly pin an iron cross on her young bosom with his own hand.

She celebrated the uncanny ingenuity of the makers of artificial limbs. They made hands nowadays that could almost think.

Klemm was not ready for such talk. It was but water



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on blazing oil. He was enraged at Fate—Fate, the sneaking secret spy that had stabbed him in the back. He was softened only by a most tender and melting pity that would have been divinely beautiful if he had ever felt it for any one but himself.

He marveled at the story of Dimny's devotion to him. Why had she saved his life? Where had she found strength to be so brave unless she had loved him?

Yet if she loved him why did she not come back? He could understand her desire to return to Brussels for her clothes; doubtless she wanted to be beautiful and neat and varied in his eyes.

But why did she not come back?

He lay there tossing, fretting, picking at his bandages like another Tristan moaning for his Isolde. Instead of keeping a shepherd at watch from a cliff for the advent of her sail on the horizon, he was incessantly sending the nurse to the window to see if Dimny's automobile were not in sight. Every motor that roared up to the hospital filled his mind with hope. But Dimny came not back.

The telegrams to Brussels were answered by the statement that she had left the Palace Hotel for parts unknown. A search was ordered; at least it was put on the file. Now that Klemm was helpless, maimed, and useless, his requisitions lacked authority. They had no more importance than the pleas of starving Belgians or Poles for bread. They must take their turn and follow the sacred rules.

If Klemm had been himself and had sent out word to find Dimny in order to shoot her she would have been found. But she was only a heroine now and Klemm a nuisance howling for her.

He could not make Dimny out. If she were a spy, as he had believed, then why had she saved his life? In his vain hours he decided that it was because she loved him. In his relapses to gloom he decided that it was merely a ruse to cast suspicion from herself and to make sure of kind treatment by the other officers.

If she were a spy it was his duty to surrender her case to his successor. Before he saw this man or knew who he was Klemm wanted to poison him.



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When this successor came to call on him he proved to be Lieutenant von Trieger. Klemm gazed on the lieutenant with contempt. He despised him for a spy and a spy-chaser. The fingers of his lost hand ached and twitched to take him by the throat and hold him fast while his right hand pummeled that sneaky face as he had buffeted Colonel von Repsold.

After discussing many matters, von Trieger said that among the memoranda on Klemm's desk he had found the name of a Dimny Parcot. What of her?

Klemm said that Miss Parcot was under surveillance only. She had withstood every test. Lieutenant von Trieger asked if Klemm had read the letter concerning the little unpleasantness at Dofnay. Klemm said that he knew of it and had sent for it but had not seen it. He only knew that the first copy had been lost and the second not received before he left Brussels. Von Trieger explained that it had come in since. He gave Klemm a carbon of the original. Now at last Klemm had the truth of the matter. He was stunned at realizing his own mistake. If he had been his complete self he would have made Dimny pay well for his self-deception.

But with a sick man's perversity he took more pleasure in thwarting his successor. He told von Trieger that he had read the letter, after all, and forgotten it because of its unimportance. Von Trieger was deceived. To him Dimny was only one of countless suspects. He had more than he could take care of. He was glad to be relieved of her.

So Dimny was safe so far as von Trieger was concerned, and Klemm was in no position to punish her now.

On the other hand, she was bound to remain in Belgium for some time to come, since her mother and sister refused to go back to America, refused so frantically that she forbore to discuss the question.

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## CHAPTER XLI

WHEN Dimny and her people and Noll rode at last into Brussels, Dimny objected to re-establishing herself at the Palace Hotel.

At the C. R. B. office Noll learned of a family dwelling in a fine old residence, a family once wealthy and fashionable, now impoverished.

The Erkelens were glad enough to take the Parcots in and to make a community of resources. Food was scarce and costly. The old grandmother had been shot in the knee while running through the streets of Malines. She kept the house and made lace all day long—pillow-lace of the Valenciennes pattern, called "the eternal" because a yard of it required at least two years of unrelenting toil. This old spider made no such progress, though her old fingers shuffled the bobbins with such relentless monotony that Dimny could hardly endure to watch her. This grandam was one of the fifteen thousand lace-workers whose art was saved to the world by the C. R. B.

The youngest daughter made toys, the eldest distributed the *repas scolaire* to school-children. The middle daughter went among the "ashamed poor." The mother sewed clothes for the layettes of new babies. She and a countess or two and four hundred telephone-girls worked in the same great room.

The money still remaining to Mrs. Parcot and the money Dimny had, as well as the two diamond rings she had brought with her, promised to keep the whole household from starving for some time yet. But the future was not bright and the one hope was that the war would be brief. Mrs. Parcot had left some funds in a bank in California. She decided to send for the amount and wrote a formal



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letter giving her address in care of the C. R. B., to assure and facilitate the transfer.

Dimny found a job on the staff of the C. R. B. Alice and her mother stayed within-doors, earning a little money and much nepenthe in the task of making garments for children, from scraps of cloth.

Of evenings, when the family gathered together, their dissipation was the embroidery of flour-sacks brought over in the flour-ship sent by the *North American Miller* loaded with the gift of the flour-men of America.

It pleased the Belgian women to use the more or less crude labels on these sacks as designs for embroidery in colored threads, and they wrote in with their needles little legends of gratitude to America.

In such a home the Parcots gradually found themselves at home, and existence fell into a routine as regular as the path of the hands on the great oh-face of the old clock.

Noll saw little of Dimny, for his car with its fluttering white flag was wearing itself out in the service of the C. R. B., darting here and there from village to village, along the canals, and in and out of Holland. When he could find the time, he courted Dimny. He never saw Alice or Mrs. Parcot. They never went out, yet never were in.

Now and then Noll took Dimny to a moving-picture show or for a ride in his car. Now and then they sat and talked in the cold salon. Yet Noll feared to say the definite word, though his longing for Dimny gnawed his heart incessantly. One evening, however, when the salon was cold and the candles swayed drearier than of wont, and the Germans had been unusually insolent with a new victory, it seemed to Noll that he must draw closer to Dimny in fact as in theory.

He moved over and sat on the little spindly settle where she shivered slimly. His approach was ominous, but not in itself a cause for reproach. She could only wait, as women must, for the opening of familiarities.

Noll's foolish babble revealed his excitement. The inconsequence of his talk betrayed the importance of his emotions, and finally, as young men have always done



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sublimely and ridiculously, he forwarded his arm, bent it round her waist, and drew himself close.

A dark look of pain and of repugnance shaded her face, her fingers unclamped his hands and swung his arm back like an opened gyve. When he tried again, as a brave man must, she rose and moved to another chair. Her grimness was more final than any hysteria could have been. She seemed to be struggling with a sick dread rather than with any offended dignity or modesty or delicacy.

Noll was afraid to follow her and afraid not to. He was troubled by the primeval fear a man feels lest a woman expect prowess of him instead of mercy. He rose to approach Dimny again. She put out her hand and hoarsely muttered, so as not to be heard in the next room:

"Don't ever come near me like that again—never!"

Noll dropped back to his place, crushed.

"I'm—I'm sorry I'm so—hateful to you."

"You're not hateful," she groaned. "It's not you I hate but—I don't know how to say it—that embracing and caressing business. Never try it again if you care for my—my—" She was going to say "friendship," but it was too stingy for what she felt for him, so she stumbled into "affection."

That word startled him by its unexpectedness and its warmth. It gave him courage to plead.

"If you really felt affection for me, Dimny, you'd want me to—to—be near you."

It is strange how difficult love-words are in the halfway spaces between indifference and ardor. Dimny shook her distractingly beautiful head.

"But I do like you! I—the fact is—I love you, Noll dear."

His heart leaped at that, and he sprang to her side with a little cry of triumph and rapture, but she shuddered from him with revulsion.

He retreated in terror of her terror. She sat twisting her hands, rubbing her forearms and writhing in a nausea.

"If that's necessary to love, I loathe love. I've seen too much. My sister told me that those German soldiers—they made love to her, caressed her, kissed her, called her pet names; and my mother, too, and—and—the thought



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of it makes me die. Can you understand? Of course you can't, but—"

"I understand," Noll replied. And now he wanted to caress her in pity and lay his hands on her hallowingly; but he could not attempt that, either, for the touch was the dreaded thing. His hands kept each other prisoner, and he stared at her across an abyss.

She saw his anguish and she said: "You'd better go away and forget me. I'm no use to you. We Parcots are cursed. Don't think of us any more. You've done everything that could be done or can be done. We're not worth any more trouble. I can't bear to bother you any longer."

This sent him into a frenzy. "But I want to be with you. I want to talk to you whenever you'll let me. I'll promise not to annoy you, if you'll only let us go on being what we have been to each other. It's enough. It's all I ask."

"If that's true, then it would be terribly precious to me to have you near me. You mustn't think I don't care for you. You're all there is in life that gives me any joy or strength or comfort. I'm horribly sorry and ashamed that I can't love you as you ought to be loved, but I've been through just a little too much."

He sat in misery till she had sobbed herself out. Then she looked up, with a smile among her tears like a rainbow. She smiled, not because she was happy, but because she was brave again and our muscles have too few expressions for our too many emotions.

We must smile when our hearts are in most pitiful case. We have nothing but a kiss for ever so many unamorous communications. She had to smile to tell him that her weeping was done. But he could not kiss her to tell her that he would not kiss her.

They tried to talk of less personal topics, but there come times in lives, as in plays, when the curtain must be lowered for a while. So Noll took his leave, and they shook hands sadly at the door, she on the sill, he one step below.

The German sentinel plodding by with a burden of snow on his shoulders thought their parting casual and formal, though their hearts beat like Romeo's and Juliet's making a litany of farewells over the ledge of a moonlit balcony.



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## CHAPTER XLII

MONTHS drifted by with alternate sun and storm. History tottered from one cataclysm to another.

The Germans dared to publish in American newspapers an advertisement warning Americans not to take passage on the *Lusitania*. They dared even to send a false wireless message and lure the ship into a trap and sink her without warning, with the massacre of more than a thousand men and women and children, more than a hundred of them Americans.

Banquets were held to celebrate the German triumph. A medal was struck in honor of the assassins and German preachers thanked their bloody God for his favor.

The Americans in Belgium said, "This brings us in!"

They made ready for the bugle-call to action. But the bugle did not blow. German diplomacy by hypocritical regrets and lying promises checked the drawing of the sword. The crisis passed. The unforgotten innocents still waited in the seas for the day of vengeance.

While time in its passage wrought in history so many unheard-of things, it wrought in nature its immemorial processes. Spring came to Belgium and brought the flowers from the ground where the shells plunged; the birds nested and sang and wed in what branches the shrapnel spared. The breezes of May wandered across the trenches and played with the smoke of battle or bore along the blinding choking clouds of gas as if they were incense.

And in the bodies of women the seeds of love or of its counterpart grew to fruition. And so for Alice Parcot and her mother a grim period came to the long sentence. They were called to go down once more into hell.

As their hour approached they felt tremors of the inveterate fear, but far more since they hated the fruit they



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must bear. Their weddings had been without wooing, without choice, without ceremony. They had been compelled to a polyandrous union on a hideous Brocken-Sabbath, on that peculiarly German festival of obscene matings which Goethe celebrated with such fervor. How eloquent a nation's legends are! The Germans had merely brought their traditions to life again. The *Wilde Jagd* had raged across Belgium and France and the *Walpurgis Nacht* had forced upon the helpless nations uncounted brats conceived in horror.

Mrs. Parcot and Alice, among their other tortures, underwent agonies of temptation to self-destruction. But while some natures have an inclination to slay themselves or others in supreme moments, the most of us are as incapable of suicide as of murder.

Nazi Duhr had quietly put an end to his remorse, fearing death less than life. But Alice and her mother, fearing life more than death, could not take up arms against their sea of troubles and, by opposing, end them.

It was still possible that accident might bring the solution that intention could not seize. They might die, as so many cherished wives had died and shall always die. Their children might be born still, or might be hushed after the first feeble wails, as so many longed-for children have been and shall be thrust back into the silences; longed-for children, heirs to thrones they might have saved, heirs to wealth or love that waited for them.

But if Providence had wished to solve their riddles so, Providence could have intervened long before. Ill-nourished, despondent, and terrified, they marched on to their goal.

They shunned the presence of Dimny toward the last, for humanity so worships innocence that it will dupe it while it can and pretend when deceit is no longer possible. They wanted Dimny not to seem to know. They wanted to think of her in the words of Habakkuk, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil."

And she, understanding their shame, humored it and kept up the pretense. And Noll played his part, though he managed, with a shy subtlety that Dimny recognized



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and dared not thank, to arrange for a physician and a nurse to be sent them, that they might be saved from the crowded cantines thronged with expectant mothers.

The two women could no more tell what their children would be nor when they would arrive than who their fathers were. But as it chanced, Mrs. Parcot's child was the earlier, and it was a girl. In her stupor, at the first cry she heard, she imagined herself her husband's wife again. She put out her arms for this baby as for her others.

She gave it the first bitter milk of maternity and lifted pain-fogged eyes to murmur, "Stephen!"

That was the name of her husband. That was the name she had breathed when her other children had been born. He had always been near, suffering with her, lending her strength from his love and his hope.

When she realized that her husband was afar, that this changeling was not his, she cried out, "Why should this happen to him?"

She forgot herself so utterly that she had no power even then to blame him for going into the Arctic wilderness and leaving her to her fate. He had left her in the flower-wilderness of California. He would return there, expecting to find her. She grieved for his grief more than her own. She could not console him when he knew, for she was herself the cause of his shame.

She hated the stranger enemy that had invaded her fidelity. In wrath she put up her hands to thrust the alien away, but the little leech was drawing the very blood from her heart. It clung greedily and its gurgling protest was such a prayer that her bosom loved it, her hands clasped it and adopted it for their very own.

One of the strangest forms of introduction in experience is the first presentation of an infant to those who have preceded it into life. Dimny could not accept fairy-tales for explanation.

She was grown, and she knew all too well the history of that baby. Its presence on earth was mysterious enough, but with the mysteries that bewilder knowledge, not the simple conundrums and charades of childhood.

Mrs. Parcot cast down her eyes and blenched, and



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Dimny choked upon the words she would have spoken. She gazed with the fascination of dread on that tiny very distant relative of hers, that half-sister, and, seeing that its plight was worse than any other plight, she felt a tug at her heartstrings and she understood that this wee bit lassiky was the most guiltless of all and the most helpless.

She lifted it from its nest and took it in her arms, pacing the floor, warmed with its fierce young warmth and thrilled ineffably as its soft hands beat her young breast, knocking at her heart and pleading, "Let me in."

She felt for the first time now the hunger for motherhood, an emptiness, a destiny. She felt that she was not something sealed and individual, but a chalice, a holy vessel wherein future lives must brew. She was afraid of the thought, but it was the fear of the virgin hearing from afar the annunciation. She had an instinct of flight and of resistance, but also an instinct of doom.

She walked swiftly up and down as if she would run away from her fate. Her mother, following her with a wondering gaze, understood and trembled. And Alice, staring at her, cried out against the merciless decree that made women long for their own most pitiful adventure.

Then Alice cried out with another pain. There was a quality in her cry that alarmed her mother and the learned nurse. There was a scurry, a hastening of Alice to her room, a despatch of messengers here and there, a doctor brought with speed to the rendezvous where life meets life in duel, with death for referee.

It would have made things so much simpler if Alice or her child had failed to pass the test. But youth fought for Alice and the irate clamor of the lusty boy who greeted the day like chanticleer ended that unspeakable hope.

If there were anything in heredity, this lad was not the son of gentle Nazi Duhr, but of some stormy tyrant whose name Alice could never know.

Dimny would not be banished from her sister's presence. She learned all there is to learn of such things in one long frightful battle, and when Alice came back from the throes of death-in-life she found a sister, if not a husband,



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there to lend her strength. Alice needed help and sympathy in the acute dismay she woke into.

She loved Dimny suddenly, and Dimny her, with a new love. They clung together desperately, Alice sobbing with the aftercurse of anguish in her torn body and her heart subjected to this second violation. She was so distraught with her torment that she paid no heed to the business of the doctor and the nurse making ready to return to the mother what they had taken from her.

But when at last the stolid nurse stood before her and in rough Flemish bade her behold what a fine great man was hers, Alice turned out of Dimny's arms a little, and cast across her bare shoulder one glance of mortal horror at the squirming, big-little, purple beast that croaked and twitched in the nurse's palms. And she snarled:

"Take that toad away! It's not mine! I hate it!"

She whirled back to Dimny, hiding her eyes in Dimny's arm.

The nurse, used to the various greetings of first mothers, smiled and scolded, and the doctor lectured Alice about her duty.

She turned again slowly and muttered: "All right. Give it to me!" And she put out her hands.

The triumphant doctor turned away and the nurse with a smile proffered the shrieking, clutching child, but Dimny, watching Alice's eyes, started and, glancing to her hands, saw how her fingers had become talons greedily crooked to tear and rend. With a cry of alarm, Dimny swept Alice's arms aside and held her back while she struggled to seize and strangle her enemy. The nurse recoiled, and the doctor whirled in amazement, snatching from the nurse the prize he had fought for.

Alice struggled in a frenzy while her strength lasted, and then fell back moaning with baffled wrath and remorseful astonishment at herself. But devastating as her remorse was, it brought no affection for the child now raging in a black frenzy of famine.

Mrs. Parcot had been reconciled to her babe because she had lived long and known wedlock and much sorrow, and



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grown used to loving children who repay devotion with ingratitude or wretchedness or death.

But Alice was still a girl. She had been denied the rites of love; she had been, as it were, lynched by a band of thugs; her innocence had been raided; without sanctity or desire she had been coerced to maternity, and her son had been as lawlessly ruthless to her innocence as his father had been.

To have killed the father in self-defense would have been accounted a righteous deed. The desperate effort to protect herself from this later sacrilege was instinctive. She had been helpless before, and had not been spared. Why should this junior partner in the outrage be spared because he was not yet strong?

So she reasoned, or acted without reason. And when she was thwarted of her instinct and saw her attempt with the horror of other eyes, she hated the child the more for hating herself on its account, since it is hardest to forgive those who make it impossible to forgive ourselves.

The babe was taken from her and lent to a great young mother as fluent of plenty as Diana of the Ephesians. It was many days before Alice could tolerate the sight of it, and then she accepted it only as a heavy penance for the guilt she had now acquired. It was safe in her hands, but she could not manufacture love by an effort of will.

She took her mother's maiden name for her married name and asked to be called "Mrs. Judson" for appearance' sake.

She had no name for her child and could find none until one day, reading in the Bible, she came upon the story of Rachel's travail of a son:

"And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni."

Alice, looking in the margin, found that the name meant "The son of my sorrow." So she gave her child that name.

But her mother called her baby by her own name, "Alma," not knowing that it meant "Nourishing."

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## CHAPTER XLIII

AND now the Parcot family was on the other side of that deep river, with two new people in their company, two persons very young, but very definite of character.

Dimny had to be the man of the family, since her father was beyond reach and her mother and her sister were unable to bestir themselves.

She stayed indoors for many days, till the physician ordered her out in the air lest she fall sick.

She walked awhile, without purpose or destination, feeling lonely beyond endurance. After a time she heard Noll Winsor's voice at her elbow, saying:

"Dimny! at last! You can't imagine how I've missed you!"

But she rounded on him with a glare of such hostility that he fell back amazed:

"What's the matter Dimny?" he pleaded. "You look as if you hated me."

"I do," she groaned.

"But why? Why?"

"Because—"

"Because—?"

"Because you are a man."

"And that's the because why I love you. And you said once that you loved me."

"I don't any more."

"But what have I done?"

"Nothing."

That was as much as he could get from her mood. He could not understand from what torment and what fear it sprang. He persisted at her elbow, pleading till she begged him to have mercy on her and leave her.

And only then he remembered to say that he had a



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cablegram for her mother. It had come in care of the C. R. B.

"Who sent it?" she asked, with dazed fatuity.

"How should I know?" he answered, still resentful.

She took it, thanked him, and walked on, then paused and meditated, ignoring the passers-by who stared and turned again to stare.

She could only think that the cabled message must mean bad news, bad news for her to take the shock of and break as tenderly as she could to her mother.

Noll, lingering near to be at hand if she needed him, saw her hesitate, then rip the envelope with sudden resolution. He saw her read, gasp, stare at nothing, while her hands drooped listless. She swayed so that he thought she would fall, and he hurried to her side, murmuring:

"Dimny, what's wrong? Is it bad news?"

"Yes!" she whispered. "My poor father—"

"He's not dead?"

"No, he's alive and well and happy."

"Then why—"

"He says he is coming over to bring us home. Oh, Noll! Noll!"

And now she clung to his arm again, and leaned upon him heavily.

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## CHAPTER XLIV

A MAN says, "There's no understanding a woman," because when they come to a crossroads of thought or feeling, he turns to the right and she to the left, and they arrive at different goals or come round into the same highway, according as the roads run.

Noll was befuddled with Dimny's seeming inconsistency. Yet she was consistent enough; their minds had simply taken different paths.

He thought: "She loves her father; he has been in the Arctic regions in danger for a long time. She and her mother and her sister need him bitterly. She ought to rejoice at his return."

But Dimny thought: "My poor father has come back from the northern peace to learn the ghastly truth about the war and what ruin it has made of his wife and daughter. His heart will be stabbed with wounds that can never be cured." She grieved for him as for a child that must learn an ugly truth. His glad words that he was coming over to bring his family home showed how innocent he was of their plight. His poor wife and his poor daughter would have to face him and explain their griefs—and exhibit their children.

That woe beyond woe was what was breaking Dimny's spirit.

Noll could not imagine her reasons, but he understood them when she explained them in a few pitiful words.

She stood on the crowded street, bewildered with the confusion of her thoughts. But Noll was mooded to find an escape from thought by an energetic action. It was to him not a matter of bewailing the situation, but answering the cablegram.



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"What will you wire him?" he asked.

"How do I know?" Dimny moaned. "I'm afraid to show this message to mamma. She will go mad. She'll never consent to his coming over here."

"Then she must go to him."

"She'll never be able to do that."

"But she can't disown him," Noll insisted. "He's done nothing to deserve that."

"He's done nothing to deserve what has happened to his family, either," Dimny protested.

Noll fled from a discussion of the ethics of punishment. "He's done nothing to deserve what his family proposes to do to him, either. If you don't go back to America, he'll come over here to look for you."

"Oh, he mustn't do that!" Dimny cried. "The sea is too dangerous. I suppose we'll have to go back."

"But the sea is just as dangerous for you."

"Oh no, it isn't! It will be safe for us because we want to die. There's no insurance like wanting to die."

He studied her where she stood, so young, so alive, so steeped in beauty, so desirable; and the thought that she wanted not to live, that she wanted to restore the flower she was to death and the dust, was as shocking as a blasphemy.

"Hush!" he groaned. "Don't talk that way, for God's sake!"

"All right," she replied. "I won't talk that way if you want me not to, but I can't help thinking that way."

She turned to go, and he went along, pleading with her to believe that there was still happiness possible for her family, a bruised, crippled happiness, perhaps, but as much of it as anybody could expect in this gory world, and more than innumerable other families could count on.

He praised up life and advertised the merits of pluck and of never saying die. His arguments left her cold, though she used them herself with great warmth, later, when Noll left her at her door and she went in to break the news of the cablegram as slowly and gently as she could to Alice and her mother.

They were overwhelmed by it, just as she was, and with



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even more dismay, since they were the actual victims and she only a kinswoman of tragedy.

They were thrown into complete panic. They spoke of suicide as their only recourse, and with more earnestness than ever. They were very near, indeed, to the actual step.

The stampede of their faculties was aggravated by a feeling that Stephen was already at the door, just about to knock, just about to turn the knob and rush in, his eyes aglow with devotion. It would be like him to surprise them as a great joke.

They could hardly endure the thought of his smile and his cry of welcome. They could hardly endure the vision of the change that would come over him as he staggered back from the sight of them.

And yet they did endure it as people endure almost everything, as the world was enduring everything and rolling on. As some poetess has written:

> How much the heart may bear and yet not break!
> How much the flesh may suffer and not die!
> I sometimes think that neither pain nor ache
> Of soul or body brings our end more nigh.
> Death chooses his own time. Till that is sworn
> All evils may be borne.

These women had certainly had their mettle tested. There was hardly any outrage of spirit or flesh that they had escaped. Yet they were strong enough to suffer this new ordeal, and the showers of their tears rather renewed than quenched the fires of their spirit.

They debated flight from the sight of Stephen Parcot, and flight from the light of day. They cast aside all the big arguments for living and going to America. But one little argument finished their mutiny against fate. And that was Dimny's quotation from Noll:

"If you don't come back to him, he'll come over the ocean to you."

"Oh, he mustn't do that!" Mrs. Parcot cried. "It's too dangerous. We have done enough damage to his happiness without risking his dear life."



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And so at last they resolved to go back to America, in order to risk their own lives instead of his.

Having decided to go back to him, they could wonder how he would receive them.

"He will be terribly good to us," Alice wept.

"To you," her mother sighed. "He will take you to his arms without question, you poor, bruised lamb; but me, what will he do with me?"

"He will love you more than ever," Dimny cried.

"Oh yes, he may love me more, and he will feel sorry for me, but—this poor baby—she will keep us apart forever."

A terrific thought occurred to Dimny. She stammered, "He might think he was the father if—if you didn't tell him just how old she is."

This thought was hardly so appalling as the fact that Dimny should be sophisticated enough to think it. It was a thought to cower before, but the education that Dimny had undergone was yet more crushing.

Mrs. Parcot dared not face it. She said: "I will let him divorce me and be free."

She tightened her hold on the baby. They would go into the wilderness together.

They talked about the advisability of preparing him for the shock by telling him the truth. But Dimny said:

"The German censor wouldn't pass the cable. You'd only attract the attention of the brutes. It will be hard enough to get out of the country as it is."

She remembered the difficulty she had had in persuading von Bissing to release the English girls. And that reminded her of Miss Curfey, the first she had promised to restore; the only one she had not sent back.

She resolved to hunt up two men, Noll and Klemm, the latter for Miss Curfey's passport, the former for her own.

Dimny had long ago given up her American habit of walking freely along the street with her eyes guilelessly alert for interesting glimpses of life, looking at the men she met as at the women, children, dogs, and street-cars and with no more thought of flirtation. Nor had she practised that form of counter-flirtation which leads a foolish woman



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to pretend to be violently oblivious of the existence of men about her path.

In Belgium Dimny had learned that a careless brush of the glance across a German officer's face evoked an instant response, and perhaps a pursuit. The common soldiers, of course, were too humble to misunderstand her casual interest in them, for there is a strange observance of caste in the amorous aspirations of men; only the most unusual of them even consider the women of an upper grade to desire them. The enlisted man longs for the peasants and the servant-girls and wastes hardly a look on the lady going by. She is the officer's interest. A man may condescend; the prince may ogle the chambermaid; but presumption is rare. Dimny had no adventures with the common soldiers except to be gruffly bespoken as an Englishwoman. But the officers were a pest. The virtuous insulted her; the vicious were too gracious.

She was going along now with an old-fashioned, downcast eye, when she realized that she was being followed, shadowed. Footfalls attended hers like an echo of her own.

At length she was headed off; she stopped short, made to move round the obstruction, but was checked again.

She looked up with a flare of indignation and saw a very lean German with one vacant sleeve looped and pinned to his breast. On his face were new scars in addition to the familiar memorials of that old-time saber slash.

"Oh!" she gasped, "it's Colonel Klemm! I didn't know you."

"Do you safe so many lifes?"

"I don't understand. What do you mean?"

"You ditt safe me my life—not true?"

"Oh no, I merely—"

"*Aber ja!* and as in olten dimes dose life belongks by you. Is it nothingk I could do to proof it? I have one arm only now, but still a little influence—"

"There is one thing you might do for me—if you only would."

"I only vill," he declared. Then he saluted her and answered, in the formula of a soldier acknowledging an order from his superior officer, "*Zu Befehl!*"



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She missed the gracefulness of this homage. She kept silence till he asked, abruptly:

"Your *Mütterchen* and your *Schwesterchen*, how find dey demselfs?"

"They are very well, thank you."

"And de—how to say—*Holzäpfel*, dey go good besites—yes?"

She guessed that a *Holzapfel* was a wild apple, but she did not know that the word was also slang for an illegitimate child. Her innocent, "I don't understand" took him aback a little. He explained: "I ditt heard dey have two nize babies now. Dose babies go good, yes?"

"How did you know?" Dimny asked, crimsoning.

"To know is my *Geschäft*. I know, too, de letter your sister writed you by America from Dofnay."

Dimny blenched with vicarious shame. She turned her back on him and resumed her course. He followed, apologizing. She would not speak to him except to say:

"Bring me Miss Curfey and I'll talk with you."

"Vy you don't come get her vit me?"

"Because I can't trust you."

"Oh, Mees Parcot!" He put up his hand with the ingenuous horror of an unsullied innocence cruelly misjudged. That she should distrust him, him who was only a spy!

"You deceived me once. You will again."

"*Nein, und abermals nein!* I give you proofs if only you esk me. I vish it only to do your pleasure."

She stared at him keenly. He met her eye without flinching, for he was entirely sincere in his desire to win her good opinion, and better than that. She nodded to herself with a sudden resolution, and spoke:

"If you mean what you say, you can give me proof. My mother, my sister, and I want to go back to America. Get us our passports."

This was a facer indeed. To win closer to her heart he offered to do anything she asked, and she asked him to arrange for her eternal removal from his sight.

He shook his big head glumly. "Esk somethingk else, but to do dat I could not."



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She smiled grimly and moved on. He ventured to check her with his hand. She looked down on her arm where he held it, and he let go, pleading:

"I get passports for your mamma and Mees Ellis, but not for you."

This puzzled her so that she demanded, "Why?"

"I do not like Brüssel vitout you," he smiled.

This was entirely too proprietary to endure.

"Colonel Klemm!" she gasped. He tried to be playful.

"Or if you must gone, take me vit you—yes?"

She did not answer this or anything else he said, though he trudged at her elbow till she reached the office of the C. R. B. He dared not follow her in, and she did not bid him good-by.

He knew that Noll Winsor was stationed there and he curdled with jealousy.

He writhed with another torment, the torment of a man who has had power and abused it and lost it. In times like these, when brute force of mind and body was a man's chief asset, he had nothing to commend him.

He loitered about for a while in a rage of uncertainty. Suddenly he smiled. The absurdity he had uttered as an appeasing witticism about going to America with Dimny struck him all of a heap as no absurdity at all, but an act of the highest wisdom.

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## CHAPTER XLV

LONG before Dimny arrived to take up the question of a passport, Noll had been discussing it with Skelton.

When Noll broached the question of the departure of the Parcots, Skelton growled:

"Passports, eh? Under the circumstances there'll be grave difficulties."

"Difficulties! Why?"

A look was exchanged. Noll saw that Skelton understood. The outrageousness of German domination revolted him as never before. He had been born and bred in the feeling that he as an American citizen had sacred prerogatives. Dimny and her mother and sister as American women were still more inviolate.

"They're only asking what's their right as Americans."

"What rights has a nation of a hundred million people and a hundred thousand soldiers against a nation with seventy million people and seven million soldiers?"

For a moment Noll's rage swung against his own countrymen. "We don't deserve to be free!" he snarled. But he could not remain more than an instant in that mood, and he fell back to blind rage at Germany.

It was unbearable that she should treat the citizens of the sacred Republic with the same toploftiness as the Belgians.

Germany had shown her hand. She had struck a friendly neighbor down without warning, had occupied this Naboth's vineyard and tortured his children. Did the United States take warning? Was it ready to protect its citizens with the only protection that could be translated into German?

A panic seized Noll, a panic of impatience to get home and start the cry of alarm. He could go at once, but he could not leave Dimny or her people.

To ask for passports for the mother and sister and their babies would attract attention to them, would bring on



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questions as to names, husbands, birth certificates, with an exposure of their guilt as victims and a possible refusal of permission to depart.

To attempt to smuggle them across the line or make a bold dash would be to invite death or imprisonment, and if America demanded their release the parley would advertise the very facts they must conceal.

In the midst of his perplexities Dimny appeared. She told him that her mother and sister had decided to go back to America at once. She wanted to make sure of the passports and also to cable her father that they would start back as soon as they had finished some charity-work.

She explained to Noll: "The real reason is, of course, that the babies are not strong enough to start across the ocean yet. But I can't tell my father that. He—he doesn't know that there are any babies."

Noll shook his head in anguish for her. She went on to tell him about Colonel Klemm. The mention of that name startled an idea out of Noll—perhaps Klemm the user could be used.

Noll did not mention this thought to Dimny, but he felt so cheerful with new plans that he told her to go ahead and cable, as he would assure her return.

A happier thought struck him. One of the couriers was about to go to England *via* Holland. He would cable from London and give the Rotterdam office as their address. This would ease the father's mind and avoid the German attention.

She wrote out a message and one of the Rhodes Scholar couriers promised to memorize it to avoid carrying a paper that might fall into German hands. Noll walked home with Dimny and then went to the Palace Hotel to call on Colonel Klemm. When the colonel appeared Noll practised on him his best etiquette and his best German.

"I have been very busy and you have been ill, and I have had no chance to answer your proposition."

"What proposition?" Klemm asked. His memories of the past had not been entirely reassembled since the shock of his wounds.

"Don't you remember making me a proposition to go back to America and act as a secret agent of Germany?"



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Klemm recalled the whole incident with delight. "*Ach* yes! Well, what is your answer?"

"*Ach* yes."

Klemm was overjoyed. He seized Noll's hand in his and wrung it with the hospitality of the devil buying in another soul.

"You mean that you will serve the Fatherland?"

"Well, it's only my stepfatherland, and it's not a job I relish."

"No more do I, *lieber Herr Vinsor*. If I had my way I should be in the trenches. But that is too beautiful to be, so I do the next best. And it is not a bad business as one might think at first. How is it more wicked to deceive your friend than your enemy? How is it more cruel to act as a spy and save your country than to deceive and shoot and stab the enemy in the ditch? You will be amazed when I tell you about our organization over there. It is wonderful how well the machinery works. In fact, I have a hope of joining the American espionage myself."

"You mean you may come to America?" Noll exclaimed, with an enthusiasm that Klemm entirely misunderstood.

"I hope I may."

"I hope you do!" Noll said, with a bloodthirsty fervor. "I'll go over and get everything ready for you."

"Colossal!" said Klemm.

"By the way, there's a little favor I'd like to ask you."

"It is granted."

"I want passports for the three Parcot women."

This pleased Klemm. He did not care what became of Dimny's mother and sister, but if he were going to America he would want Dimny to be there and to be well disposed toward him. To hamper her would alienate her; to smooth the way for her would be the best commendation he could find to her favor.

"I think I can arrange it," he announced, abruptly.

"Splendid!" said Noll. "And I can't tell you how glad I'll be to see you in our country. We'll all be able to repay you what we owe you—over there."

He clacked his heels and bowed and bowed, mirroring Klemm's antics as best he could.



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## CHAPTER XLVI

THE life of the Parcots had a new excitement now. Before them stood the prospect of a return home. They had grown so used to the Belgian misery that the refurbished memories of America were like fantastic imaginings of some utopian dream-world.

Was it possible that there was a country where there was no war? where an enemy was not in possession, making and enforcing the laws? where slaughter and the news or fear of slaughter were not the daily bread? where there was not a bayonet at every corner? where the populace did not inhabit bread-lines? where one came and went at will?

At times their nostalgia swept over them in gusts of longing. At times they dreaded to go back at all, since they could not leave behind them their experiences.

At times they rejoiced to think of having Stephen Parcot as their defender, that strong, fearless man who loved them so. At times they shuddered at the thought of facing him.

But the day of departure drew near and they had not the courage to refuse to go. Stephen had received Dimny's cablegram and answered, with unsuspecting devotion and impatience, that he would meet them in New York.

On one of their last days in Belgium Klemm appeared to say that he could not persuade Miss Curfey to leave the convent. He urged Dimny to go with him to convince her that the invitation was honest.

Dimny consented with much uneasiness, and set forth in his car. It was not the great gray racer he had used before, for now he was no longer king. The cripple was lucky to get a crippled car. Yet he might still by a word prevent or delay the escape from Belgium.

Noll had told Dimny of the game he was playing, first to



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facilitate the departure and second to learn what he could of German propaganda in America.

Dimny enacted the rôle assigned to her to perfection, though she loathed it. She loathed everything about Klemm except his misfortunes. She was not one who could gloat over the writhings even of a scotched rattlesnake.

Klemm took her straight this time to the convent where Miss Curfey was housed, and waited outside while Dimny made her attack.

Miss Curfey, like so many of her race, suffered such an instant timidity before strangers that at their first advance she drew into her shell like a turtle. She would also snap at the hand put out too promptly. This action is really an expression of shyness, not of aggression; but foreigners naturally misinterpret it. The all-amiable American is particularly liable to provoke the retreat and miscall it contempt.

Perhaps Miss Curfey inherited the trait from some ancestress left in charge of a castle while her husband was at the Crusades. The appearance of a stranger was enough to cause her to retreat to her tower and let her portcullis fall.

When Dimny asked for her at the convent and the Mother Superior fetched her, Dimny was not greeted as any rescuing angel, but as a suspicious invader.

The visits of Klemm had confirmed the fluttering convent in the view that some mischief was afoot. The tall Miss Curfey looked down on the small Miss Parcot from a turret of anxiety across a moat of fear. But Dimny read it as disdain and distrust, and flushed with wrath, and was tempted to leave her in her castle. She met silence with silence and glare with glare for a moment, while the Mother Superior waited whitely.

At length Dimny remembered how her first impressions of England had been changed after she got inside the turtle-shell. She realized that she must make a formal presentation of her credentials before she could expect any welcome.

She warmed to the poor, big child-woman regarding her so coldly, and made her most diplomatic approach.



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"Miss Curfey, when I was in London" (a little mellowness came into the girl's hard eyes), "visiting at Mrs. Devoe's"—(this was still better; Miss Curfey knew Helen Devoe well; her heart came down a step from the high tower), "I was talking to Captain Gilbert Roantree" (Miss Curfey was at a lower window suddenly), "and his mother was saying to me—"

"You know Mrs. Roantree? and Gilbert?" Miss Curfey gasped.

Dimny laughed at the quite unintentional insult of this, as if it were astonishing that a mere Yankee could know a Roantree. She could not resist a little boastfulness.

"Captain Gilbert motored me everywhere and—and—but it was his mother that kissed me good-by."

"Not rilly!" Miss Curfey cried, whirling down two whole flights of winding stairs.

Dimny went on: "The first time I talked to Mrs. Roantree, at Helen Devoe's, there was another woman there who spoke of the English girls in Belgium. She said she had a daughter here, and when I told her I was coming over to find my own mother and my sister she broke down and wept and wept in Mrs. Roantree's arms."

Miss Curfey was at the gate now, the portcullis up, the drawbridge falling. She was breathing hard from her quick descent of all those stairs.

"Who—who was she?" she panted.

"She said that her daughter had written that she was at work on a Christmas present and would bring it home when she came, but—"

Miss Curfey had her by the arm, squeezing it cruelly and demanding: "What was the daughter's name? Tell me!"

"Ethel Curfey."

Now the countess from the tall tower was a broken-hearted girl sobbing in Dimny's arms and calling her, or at least calling across the shoulder she leant on:

"Mother! Mother!"

Dimny felt motherhood too, and her young heart ached with a presage of that time when she should have grown daughters lost in the wars and invasions of, say, 1945.

Helen Curfey clung to her and fondled her now and told



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her how wonderful she was; how no-end good and patient and "all that" she had been to such a rotten little rottah as herself, whom she ought to have jolly well smacked ovah, rahthah; and would she mind it quite too horribly if she kissed her? And, oh, she was quite mad to be back at home, doing her bit as the other gels did, breaking hosses and plowing and making munitions, or anything to be doing something.

The bursten dam of her long-pent chatter somehow reminded Dimny of "How the waters came down at Lodore." But she finally dammed the stream again by speaking of the necessity of getting ready and of having a photograph taken for her passport.

While the sisters packed her luggage Dimny carried her off to a photographer. The picture was hardly a success, as the girl could not sit still and her eyes were swollen with tears, but it served, and after a deal of waiting and farewelling Dimny and Klemm carried Ethel Curfey back to Brussels.

And now the time of departure was at hand. Noll was to run a C. R. B. car to Rotterdam for the last time and leave it for his successor to bring back.

Klemm asked if he might not go with them to the border; and since there was protection in his lee, they gave consent.

His motives were two; a jealous wish to rebuff any of his fellows who might ogle Dimny; a hungry instinct to prolong his sight of her to the last moment.

The car was thronged with passengers; Mrs. Parcot and Alice with their babies, and Dimny and Helen, besides Klemm and Noll and the baggage, but Klemm more than paid his fare by the delays he saved at the innumerable sentry-posts.

He went all the way to the gate between the death-charged wires that cut off the Netherlands from Flanders. He got out of the car there and kissed Dimny's hand, and she felt warm tears splashing from his harsh eyes. He dared not raise his head till he had shaken them off.

And still he could not let her go. He followed afoot till he was at the very line. When the car was in Holland for



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sure, Noll stopped it and got out with a murmured "Excuse me one moment."

Noll, once his feet were on the Netherlands, drew a breath of air already free. He could have fallen on the ground like another Ulysses and kissed it for its safety.

He had brought his passengers over the dead-line. He had lied and cheated, but he had the absolution of success. Now there was an opportunity to free his soul of this guilt, also to wash his hands of the muck they had dug into to bring up these prizes. He motioned to Klemm to come closer. The Dutch sentinel there stared at him indifferently. The German sentinel walked away. There he paused on the invisible equator between freedom and slavery, between humanity and Germanity. Noll began with some diffidence, in German.

"Colonel Klemm, I want to play fair with you, now that I can. I promised you that I'd work for Germanism in America."

Klemm tried to quell this indiscretion. He put his finger to his lips and shook his head.

Noll went on:

"I promised you because I didn't know any other way to get these poor victims out of your clutches. I want to tell you now that I was lying all the time. I never had the faintest intention of such dirty work. I didn't dare tell the truth while I was in the German lines, for you Germans have no sense of your own rights or anybody else's.

"But I'm a free man now, and I can afford to be an American again. And I want to tell you that the minute I get home I'm going to tell what I know about you. I'm going to turn over to our Secret Service what you've told me about your Secret Service, and—"

Klemm had begun to puff and snore with rage, not only at Noll's treachery, but at his own folly. He was as much appalled at the perfidy of this trustee of his confidence as any maiden meeting human duplicity for the first time.

He clenched and unclenched his right hand as if it had Noll's windpipe in throttle. He even tried to clench and unclench his absent left hand.

His right hand went into his pocket. With a guttural



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rasp of fury he drew a revolver, bestrode the line, and jammed the muzzle into the pit of Noll's stomach.

"Come beck once! *Hände hoch!*"

A detective had taught Noll a few tricks long ago. He remembered one of them now. His right hand, about to rise in a gesture of surrender, darted to the left and slapped the revolver aside so swiftly that before Klemm's trigger finger could act the muzzle of the revolver was past Noll's hip and the bullet went into the ground between the Dutch sentinel's feet.

As the Netherlander rose gracelessly into the air with a yelp, Noll's right hand met his left hand and the two worked diligently together, twisting Klemm's hand back along his forearm until the agony and the fear of broken bones drew a wolf-like howl from his contorted mouth.

He doubled up and writhed and his knees bent under him. Before his wrist broke, his fingers relaxed and Noll's left hand gathered in the revolver as easily as plucking an ear of ripe Indian corn from a stalk.

In the next instant he had thrust the straightened forefinger of his other hand into Klemm's cheek near the nostril. It held him like a spear-point, and before he could reach up to snatch the hand away he was tossed backward into the unwilling arms of the advancing German sentinel.

The easy success of his tricks made Noll laugh, and he called across the infinitesimal abyss between the two nations: "I'm sorry to pick on a man with only one arm, but if you don't stay put I'll come over there and beat your fat head off, anyway."

Klemm was shuddering with humiliation. The Dutch sentinel stood bareheaded—having lost his cap in the upward bound—with his bayonet-point inviting Klemm to cross the line into his parish. The German sentinel clung to Klemm's arm and haled him back.

He was trebly helpless. Noll was afterward a trifle ashamed of the young-American brag that impelled him to shout:

"I'm coming back from America one of these fine days, and the next time you see me I'll have a uniform on and a Springfield in my hand."



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He smiled at Klemm's futile retort: "You did not got to America yet."

Noll was about to toss the revolver back to its owner, but he pocketed it instead, after looking to its safety-lock. He chuckled with success as he clambered into his car again, but the white faces of the women sobered him. He had not yet learned dignity and he felt cheap. But there were compensations.

A turn of the road gave them all a last view of poor Belgium. They looked back past the glittering spikes on the helmets of the German guards, at the hapless, unoffending land, and tears hurt their eyes. So many innocent people were there, so many dead, so many left to dwell in a prison of hate among ruined homes and lives, to face starvation, contempt, outrage, slavery, for years upon years. It seemed a kind of treachery to abandon them. And their worst foreboding did not prophesy a tithe of what was to follow.

"We'll come back for them," Noll said. "America can't stand off forever."

He drove on, and it was good to be in a free land. He heard Dimny describing her adventures here and pointing out to her mother and sister and to Ethel Curfey the little cottage of Vrouw Weenix, who was joined now to the innumerable company the Germans had herded into the grave.

At Rosendaal they paused to see if they could get word of the Reumont family. They, too, had gone, and new sorrowers had taken their places who knew nothing of them.

Holland could only cower under the menace of Germany, which, like a vast billow stayed by the hand of a god or a devil, hung imminent, always about to crush and smother the Netherlands in such misery as Flanders presented for an eternal warning.

The fugitives crossed the Channel wearing life-preservers, for the dread of submarines was an increasing horror. The Germans were sinking everything they found, hospital-ships, Dutch ships pledged to safety, food-ships of the Belgians, loading the bottom of the sea with millions of tons of grain while famine grew and gnawed.



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Noll and his charges at last reached Albion behind her white cliffs and her black ships. But they were not safe even here, since Germany was sending her Zeppelins now, her air fleets, and her stealthy coast-raiders—like embers from the hell-furnace of hate.

A train took them to London. The train was filled with officers and men on leave, with wounded and with men whom miracles had kept unscathed for future agonies. When the station was reached they sprang into the arms of their people at the station and craved one favor only!

"Ask no questions. Say nothing of the war. Give us love and bath-tubs, dancing and theaters, music and laughter and clean clothes, but no war-talk."

They wanted to fill their hearts with a store of joy against the day that should start them back to the ditches where life was hardly less grievous than death and where the wounds were welcome that took them to "Blighty" to stay.

Mrs. Curfey was at the train. Her husband had gone to Gallipoli, one of her sons was in Egypt, another in Salonica, and another somewhere on the sea. Ethel rushed into her arms and they wept bountifully the sweet salt tears of reunion. They smothered Dimny with gratitude and begged her to stay with them. Dimny introduced her mother and her sister as her excuses for declining the invitation. But Mrs. Curfey would not be denied.

"Oh, there's so much room at my house, so many empty rooms! It would be so good of you to come to us."

Dimny ignored her mother's and Alice's signals to refuse, and accepted. They enjoyed the advantages of the English custom of leaving their guests to their own devices, since they were also left to their own secrets.

Dimny called on Helen Devoe in the hope of seeing Katherine or Lane Sperling. Helen greeted her with the same casual cordiality, and said that her room was ready for her and the cigarettes were on the table just back of her.

Katherine, she said, was somewhere in France or Flanders, just back of the battle-front. Helen got out her latest letter and let Dimny read it. Katherine, the fashionable, the smart, the girl who had flitted from frock to frock three



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or four times a day and from tub to tub, and from manicure to hair-dresser, and who could forgive anybody anything but a mental or a bodily slovenliness, had written on paper that a scullery-maid would have scorned, by a candle in a cellar:

If mother could only see me now! I've had my hair cut off short like a convict's. I had to. They got past kerosene and the kerosene gave out and I had too much else to do to take care of so many pets.

I washed my face yesterday, too—honestly! It didn't do much good, since there was no soap and the water was dirty, and only a cupful of it, but it felt glorious! Try it once. I haven't had my clothes off for three days and nights and I haven't had a bath for exactly three weeks.

Last night the damned boches dropped a shell in my boudoir, so I had to sleep in another cellar with eighteen soldiers sprawled round. They were too dead beat to look at me and I was perfectly chaperoned by my short hair and my muddy pants and boots.

If you have any extra hot-water bottles fire 'em over. We've discovered that if we can get into the trenches and warm the wounded up well before they start back through the communication-trenches to the ambulances and on back, we save a heap of lives. It's the first shock and the horrible chill that do for so many.

I miss my poor little ambulance, but I'm glad the little shell missed me, so I can't complain. In fact, I'm having the time of my fair young life. Don't feel sorry for me, for I wouldn't swap my mud-puddle for the coziest corner in Paradise.

Got to stop now. The evening Hate is just beginning to commence. Good-by, darling!

Your devoted

KATHERINE.

So changed was the world that Dimny, reading, envied her and began to lay her plans to enter the same blissful estate.

Helen went with her to call on Mrs. Roantree. The captain was home again. He had left two legs in France and his handsome face was hard to look at casually, especially under the burning vigilance of his two eyes, eyes that had seen the deepest circles of Inferno. But his talk was a little more flippant than before. He was a bit more ashamed of the bravery that won him the V. C.

"Thank God, they left enough of me to wear the trinket on. Good of 'em—what?"

He had three friends who had neither an arm nor a leg left; they called themselves "oysters."



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Mrs. Roantree was too proud of the broken vase that she had formed for the world, and filled with her own brave spirit, to show any grief over the ruins that were left of him.

Dimny was glad to get out into the air. But there was no escape. The parks were more crowded than ever with remnants of men, and more troops were drilling than before. The sight of these fruits of war did not stop recruiting. It was a greater spur than any other eloquence.

And, curiously, the feeling that Dimny drew from this hell above ground was not one of joy that her people were out of it, but of humiliation that they abstained from plunging in.

Noll Winsor, when she met him, had the same spirit:

"I'm ashamed to go about the streets in civilian clothes," he groaned. "I'd join the British army this minute if I didn't think I'd do more good to take you home and come back with a million American men in uniform."

"You'll bring me back with you, I hope," said Dimny.

He stared at her and his arms longed in his sleeves to clasp her, but they remembered their lesson. He had an intuition that he saw a look of disappointment in Dimny's eyes, but he dismissed such instinctive wisdom, as men do and women don't, and all he said was:

"I've got the steamer tickets. We sail to-morrow."

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## CHAPTER XLVII

DIMNY, walking the deck with Noll, remembered her deck-walks with Lane Sperling and her terror of his love and his embrace.

Now a new spirit imbued her soul. The ocean, seen from the parapet of the high-upstanding ship, was vast and somber, though at peace with the quiet air. The waves seemed lonely, putting up hands against the ship that ran past and would not wait for them. It was a following wind that day and the waves were overtaken and left behind. They could not keep up, yet toiled on.

Where were they going? They were but images, nothing but shapes. The wave was only an arrangement, a pattern; the drop of water that darkled in the trough of one wave did not go on with it, but became a jewel of spray on the next, a bit of froth on the next, and again a dark drop. Yet it was the waves that seemed to yearn and strive.

What else were humankind? The particles of their bodies were not the same to-day as yesterday, as to-morrow. Yet the wave of life ran through them or they through the wave, plunging into gloom, leaping into hope, falling back into the depths, helpless in each estate.

History was waves, as people were. There was a tempest upon the face of the waters now. And the peoples of the world were churned up against one another, billow clashing with billow and current striving against current.

It was calm in America, but the tide set that way; the whitecaps rode thither. How long could her shores escape the hurricane?

What preparations were they making against the onset? They had news enough of the wreckage it made. Surely



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when Dimny reached America she would find it astir with preparation.

She was thinking of such things because she was taking home with her the knowledge of the storm, the bitter proofs of its cruelty—proofs that she could not display or mention. The bitterest part of her grievance was that it could not be bewailed. It involved silence and evasion; it would compel lies and subterfuges.

In this mood of bitterness she had need of what little sweetness life might vouchsafe. Her heart turned to her companion for solace. Nowhere else was there comfort. He knew her secrets, and did not despise her for her misfortunes, but needed her and dogged her steps.

George Moore has said something to the effect that all the amorous literature in the world has less influence than a warm breeze, a bare arm, or a coquettish glance.

The warm wind was at work on Noll Winsor. Dimny did not look at him. They hardly spoke. Yet the breeze wooed for them. It beat on their cheeks with a panting tenderness. The sea breathed and throbbed like a million hearts on one vast bosom. The air was the very attar of loneliness.

Noll was intoxicated with it. He had loved long and vainly, had endured suffering, peril, and deferment. It was so useless to go on postponing what happiness there was at hand. Dimny had no other lover, no other ambition. He knew that. Yet she had forbidden him to hope.

At any moment through that placid sea there might come with a shark-like rush a torpedo to splinter the unsubstantial platform that upheld them out of the sea. And then death would be their portion, and no more love, an end to delight before even the beginning of it.

They would perish in torture and never know the sweets of passion, self-cheated wasters of opportunity who spurned the roses and gathered the thorns. Procrastination would thieve away what pitiful little rapture the doomed world permitted. The roses would droop soon and sift their wilted petals on the ground.

A sense of the great need of hurry alarmed him. The



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At any moment through that placid sea there might come a torpedo. And then death would be their portion. The one important thing was haste, to embrace and make love before the gulf opened beneath their feet.

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one important thing was haste, to embrace and make love and be wed before the gulf opened beneath their feet.

He was enraged at the folly of dying even into paradise without first knowing the sufficient rapture of this flesh. In such a frenzy he glanced aside at Dimny with a maniac impatience. He loved her to a hatred. She was so bitterly beautiful, so miserly with that treasure, a keeper of an orchard in bloom and fruit who would neither taste the apples nor let the famished wayfarer approach.

Standing alongside like a Greek statue in blown draperies that less concealed than caressed her graces, her body was one warm appeal for love. The dreamy blur of her eyes half closed against the gale, the red petal-velvet of her mouth, the arc of her chin, the progression of curved profiles, from round shoulder and arm to her instep, the mellifluous surfaces of her as she moved and glowed—he deified and adored them all with a lover's priestcraft. And he was terrified lest he see her butchered and mangled on a shattered deck, or choking and floundering in the ocean and then dead.

He was half mad with the frenzy to seize her before death got her. But he had tried before to pluck her love and she had turned to ice in his arms. He was afraid of her.

If he had but guessed, he might have had his way, for an influence stronger than his own or her scruples was in possession of Dimny. She had gone through the horrible phases of love first and had grown used to them. She had come through them as through a dark ravine that she had entered from the wrong side. She was back again in youth.

Noll had become one of her family. She kissed and fondled her mother and her sister and she was returning to the father whose affection had been rich in tenderness. The thought of him and of his welcoming arms and devoted kisses redeemed the offices of affection. She was lonely now for the clench of strong muscles about her. She needed to be crushed and smothered up in a great love.

She hoped that Noll would dare again, but he did not and she could not tell him that her old prejudice was gone.

The slow seesaw of the deck threw them against each other now and then and she found the contact sweet. But



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Noll always made haste to move away and even to ask her pardon.

She could not read his mind. She mistook his sullen reticence for boredom or resentment. She walked the deck till she was tired out. She lingered on various pretexts in nooks where no one was. She sank down at the foot of a roaring funnel where nobody could see them. But Noll said never a word of love and she could not know that the petty frolic of a tendril of hair fluttering against the nape of her neck bereft him of his senses till he wanted to cry out against such thwarted beauty.

A few sailors disturbed them at length with apologies. They were going to swing in the life-boats. Noll asked why, and a sailor of evident origin answered:

"We're pahssing aht of the dynger zown, seh, and it looks a bit loike ryne. So we're gowing to put the covers on the bowts."

"We're out of the danger zone, eh?"

"Ow yus, seh, we're syfe enough nah, seh. The 'Uns wown't tech us 'ere; and we're west'ard-bahnd at that."

Noll breathed more easily. He felt that he had been afraid in vain. The sea was beautiful ahead. The dark clouds promised a cozy rain, and beyond them was America.

He leaned on the rail and gazed into the water with more comfort. Dimny joined him there. There was a lull in the wind, the waves gave up no spray, but ran with smooth heads unruffled.

And yet there was a glisten of spray in the distance there. Noll studied it idly. He pointed it out to Dimny. It was an odd sort of spray. It did not belong to the waves. It cut across them. Some fish was charging the ship perhaps, foolishly thinking to make prey of it.

Then his smile became a grimace. His heart turned to lead. It began to beat his breast like the clapper of an alarm-bell.

He tried to find breath to cry out, "Run!" though there was no place to run. The ship's bells hammered out the hour in mellow couplets, but above them with a jangling harshness rang the shout from the crow's-nest as if from some warning angel in the sky:



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"Torpedow on the pawt baow, seh!"

There was a scurry on the bridge. A sense of terror exploded about the ship everywhere at once. There was running, shouting. The sailors at work on the life-boat davits became statues gazing emptily at nothing, their hands rigid on the rigid ropes.

It was imbecile to stand and gape at the monster that came lilting through the sea, flinging up a plume of bubbles. But where was one to go to escape it?

It came right toward the waist of the doomed ship. It would strike just under their feet. They might die in ragged disintegration at once. That would be best.

But the ship was answering her captain now. The engineers down in the gulf were blindly loyal.

As a whale, seeing a swordfish charge, whirls and flounders to escape, so the ship swung with a kind of sentience, but with a horrible unwieldiness. The torpedo shot forward with impetuosity. It seemed to exult as the faithful messenger of the German captain who laughed somewhere below the waves.

Dimny's paralysis of amazement ended with a start of realization. She whirled and ran along the deck. Noll ran after her. He paused to tear three life-preservers from the racks. He counted Dimny, her mother, and Alice. He forgot himself. Yet an old woman who sprang from the companionway and clutched at one of his life-preservers, only to have it snatched from her, thought him insane with selfishness.

Noll followed where he heard Dimny's voice. She had left her people reclining in their deck chairs with their babies asleep in their arms. She had tucked their feet in well and petted them.

And now she returned to them to die with them and go down into the suffocation and the drowning in a knot of devotion.

Noll ran after her, dodging through the mob that suddenly thronged the deck from nowhere. There was a clang as of a giant axe near the bow of the ship. The deck staggered and flung him against the rail.

Then the appalling explosion roar; a geyser from the



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ship's depths ripping a crater through deck after deck; a Vesuvius of coal and iron and timber and steam and of human bodies. Then wreckage falling back on the deck—lumps of coal, ingots of steel, thudding portions of flesh; a turmoil in the water, a wild hubbub of waves about the hole in the ship's side.

Then a second roar from below, a sledging and tearing of screaming plates and bulkheads; a second geyser, more pretty bodies blasted to chunks of meat.

Noll, as he stared, saw a second torpedo scudding ecstatically through the sea. But it missed its goal. It went on by with its creamy wake and its flaunt of spray.

Noll ran round the deckhouse and found the Parcots sitting up in their steamer chairs and gaping at the dumb-show with speechless lips.

"Well, they've got us!" he said, with a wry smile. He held out a life-preserver to Dimny as calmly as if it were a waistcoat, except that he had it upside down.

She pointed to her mother and Alice. "Them first," she said.

He gave her the third preserver and set to work fitting the other two women and their babies into the jackets.

When they had donned the uniform worn by neutrals at that time, he turned to Dimny. She had her life-preserver on all wrong. He wrenched it off and put it on again, buckling her in and scolding her.

"What about you? Where's yours?" Dimny said. Before he could answer she pulled one from a rack and held it for him and tightened it about him, scolding him for his heedlessness—the new Andromache harnessing the new Hector. Her fingers were thumbs, but she was no more excited than a wife whose husband is afraid of missing his train.

The passengers were swarming the decks now. The stewards were busy, the officers and seamen at their tasks. The ship was cheery with "Aye, aye, sirs!" and commands sung out in sea chant.

Passengers were telling one another to be calm and not to lose their nerve, mumbling that panic is more dangerous than anything else and that there was plenty of time.



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The ship began to tilt. The water pouring into her deep wound weighted her down. She was sinking by the bow.

Everybody was benumbed with the multitude of things to do and not to do. All the people were making the mistakes of haste, realizing that death was enveloping them but must find them worthy of themselves. Everybody wanted to make a good end. Everybody was most afraid of being or seeming afraid. Some were brave who would have gone mad had they had the leisure for fear, and some were cowardly who would have been brave with a few moments more to make ready.

There were countless selfishnesses, gentle deeds, basenesses, and sublimities of act, word and thought. Some remembered their love and embraced in frenzy; some remembered the money in their state-rooms or in the purser's safe and ran for it.

There was leisure enough and to spare. The launching of the life-boats was a terrifyingly slow and perilous undertaking. It was all too easy to fill a boat with people, then spill them all into the sea.

As the ship sank deeper and deeper, the passengers waited, watching the water come for them.

The delay began to get on their nerves. It was unfair to ask people to go on being brave indefinitely. To sustain a careless rapture of sacrifice was too much.

Noll said to Dimny, with a chuckle: "Everybody has a life-preserver on—and has it on wrong. That's life, isn't it?"

He about to die saluted life with a critique.

At length the boats were got ready one by one.

"Women and children first," the officers and sailors cried. Nobody needed that warning. There was no debating it. Since the accidental sinking of the *Titanic* it had become a public phrase.

There followed those all but intolerable scenes that soon became so familiar to a world in which it came to be accepted as a mere incident of seafaring that the German navy should lurk in the depths and destroy unarmed men, women, and children without warning; that the Germans



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should launch torpedoes at any ship they saw with the gleeful malice of street-arabs plying nigger-shooters or snowballs. They knew that none of their own ships were abroad and it was safe to let fly.

The regular business went on here. The crew performed their specialties in heroism according to rote. The wireless operator kept shattering the air with calls while the electric power lasted.

Noll saw Dimny's mother and sister bestowed in a life-boat. Before he helped Dimny in he could not resist one clench of her dear body against his own. She did not resist him now, nor shrink. She squeezed his hands and looked immortal longings. After the boat was full there was a delay in lowering it. Noll tried to joke as one does at a pier when a steamer lags. Dimny ordered him as if she had been his devoted wife for years:

"Don't wait. Take care of yourself. Find another boat. Please! Right away! Good-by—good-by!"

As her boat went riding down to the sea he waved again and sought what means there might be for his own safety. He was rather numb about it. He found a number of men laboring over some collapsible rafts. They were unable to find how they worked. He joined them. It seemed to make little difference what happened. The world was such a rotten place.

The ship wallowed and rolled as if she were about to plunge. Noll decided not to wait. He lowered himself on a rope and struck out swimming. He wanted to get away from the environs of the ship before she sank and dragged everything down with her. He dreaded the maelstrom that would pile into the great hole she would make for a moment in the sea.

He swam as fast as his life-belt would let him. He felt very small, and the ship was huger than he had dreamed. Seen from the fretted surface of the water, she towered and spread like a whole city block of tall buildings caught in a flood and rocking on undermined foundations.

From the roof and from the windows of that skyscraper tiny people peered down. Some of them leaped and some dared not. From the stern hung long ropes, and along these



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came slowly, timidly, men the size of gossamer spiders afloat on threads of their own spinning.

Some of them could not cling. They slid and plummeted the water and did not rise again.

The water about the ship was populous with men and women and children in boats, on bits of wreckage, or swimming, all mere flotsam swung hither and yon in wave-loads.

Some of the swimmers gave up after a brief struggle. Others strangled and fought, choking and snorting, grunting, spitting, and dying at last without even the mercy of a graceful conclusion.

Some were caught between beams and crushed or beaten with wreckage hurled at them by waves.

Noll fought his way through the swirling mobs. He saw a hand bobbing up and down near him. He seized its wrist and set the claws on a spar that rolled near. A pale, wet face came up from the grave and made a feeble battle, but the soul was too jaded and the hands slipped off and sank again. That had been somebody dear to somebody, somebody to whom life was dear, and now it was—fishmeat.

Noll grew bitterer and bitterer as he saw the deaths of every sort. Fiends might have been chuckling beneath there, twitching at the ankles of those dancers in the sea and pulling them down to gulp and hurt and die wondering, their souls in just such swirl as the water.

All these peaceful citizens were flung out in vast noyades to prove that *Gott* was God. And other ships by the hundred would be cracked open and sunk as this good ship would sink.

Noll cursed Germany as countless other unoffending wretches had cursed her and would, and as History would damn these years of her supreme self-expression.

But his curses and theirs would avail nothing; they did not even warm him now. He wondered how long he could endure this paddling about in a floating strait-jacket. He swept the sea with his gaze when he rose to the peaks of billows, and there was no sign of a rescuing ship. The submarine had vanished without proffering salvation to a woman or a child.



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Thirst and hunger and cold and exhaustion would make a slow end of him. It would be better to slip out of his life-preserver and make a quick surrender. While he juggled this idea he saw a life-boat returning toward the ship. Brushing the veil of spray from his eyes, he recognized Dimny and her people. They seemed to be peering into the inferno, searching for somebody.

"Don't turn back!" Noll yelled. "Get away before the ship sinks!"

Dimny shouted: "Noll! It's you! I was looking for you!"

Noll protested that the boat was already too full. It would sink if another were taken in. He even swam away, but she cried out pleadingly that there were vacant places. A woman had gone mad with fear and leaped into the sea, and another had died of heart failure. Dimny had begged the men at the oars to go back for some one else. She had grimly intended to see that it should be Noll if she could find him.

She cried this news to him, and he came alongside and clambered in, streaming with water. He sprawled in the bottom of the boat. The other boats had gone out beyond reach of the final explosion, and waited as spectators at the edges of the arena.

At last the ship yielded up the ghost, for it seemed impossible to deny her a soul. As she sank the water swept in upon her, dragging numbers of victims along. Some of these were sucked down into one of the smoke-stacks. Then the boilers burst, and they were blown out, as from a great Roman candle. A few of these lived to drown, or to be rescued. Noll's boat, turning back for one more bit of salvage, found one of them, a woman whose clothes had been ripped from her and her skin so filled with coal dust that she seemed to be a stark-naked negress.

They dragged her aboard and brought her back to consciousness. She was so ashamed and so chilled that Noll took off his coat and even his shirt to wrap her in. He had left his overcoat on the ship.

The freighted life-boat moved on into the sea now, pointing its prow back toward England, not in the hope of



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reaching there by power of hand, but of meeting some ship sent out in answer to the long-silenced wireless cry for help.

Noll was glad to take his turn at an oar, and toil warmed him. The crew rowed on and on, space mocking them. Clouds were thickening about sea and sky.

From the clouds at length came wind and rain and lightning. The rain was cold and cruel and wanton. It was so needed in many a parched land, so useless here for grain or flower. It lashed the cowering passengers with fury-whips, filled the bottom of the boat with water, rendered the plight a little more abject.

The wind raised an ugly crisscross sea, too, and it slapped the boat this way and that and shook the people with further terrors.

Behind the storm clouds the sun withdrew unseen. When the clouds had traveled on, trailing their dark garments of rain, they left night, and a lessening sea but a bitterer chill.

Noll, unaccustomed to the oars, gave up at last, his muscles crying with ache, the palms of his hands wincing with blisters that broke and burned in the salt water. The members of the life-boat crew gave up also, spent with exertion. There was no goal in sight to spur them on, and the waves had diminished till it was not necessary to keep the oars going. Only the man at the tiller watched for vagrant waves and called now and then to the oarsmen to wake for a moment's paddling. But gradually they drooped over their oars like beaten galley-slaves and could not be wakened. Sleep came slowly to all the little populace of that community—the sleep of bankrupt strength and drained grief.

Alice and her mother had taken off their life-belts that they might feed their babies, and these slept also in the great cradle.

But Noll could not sleep. His bare flesh crept with ague. The wind had flogged him and the salt burned his wounds. He huddled himself together like King Lear's fool, poor Tom a-cold. He despised and cursed himself because he could not control his muscles, and felt as craven as a rat in a terrier's jaws.



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Dimny, waking from a dream and looking about in amazement, found herself not at home, not even in Belgium, but in a boat adrift on a midnight ocean. She stared at Noll.

He looked up at her in haggard misery, and his teeth chattered together with ludicrous inanity when he tried to make up some trivial joke.

She pondered his distress a moment, then a thought came to her. She put up her hand and took from her hair the pins, and let it fall about her. It came down in plaits and coils and her fingers unwound these until a broad mantle floated from her head. Noll had seen her hair in Carthage and wondered at its abundance.

He was too stupid to know why she dispread it now. She beckoned him, and he moved awkwardly close to her. She whispered:

"Come under my plaidie, laddie."

And she wrapped her hair about them like a shawl. He protested, but her arms embraced him, drew him against her side, and wrapped the living cloak all about him as though she had woven it just for this need. The love of it made him warm, the tingling, soothing luxury of her hair and her enfolding arms among her tresses gave him a bliss of opulence.

He clasped his fingers in hers and pillowed his cheek against her breast and she bent her chin down upon his hair. He put back his head and her lips fell on his. He was strangely comforted and reassured. And so was she. And by and by they also slept.

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## CHAPTER XLVIII

EVEN the steersman slumbered, while his practised muscles kept the rhythm of the waves. He was set and taut in his pose, his eyes keenly fastened on the sea just ahead, but there was a film over his eyes. His skull nodded with the nodding of the boat.

All the waves were alike—about so high, about so steep. The irregularities merged into a blur of hypnotic agitation. The heads rocked, the crowded bodies swayed, but the drowsy souls paid no heed.

After a while, if any one had been watching, he would have seen an odd wave coming—one of those outlaws mysteriously prowling in every sea, wearing a white crest in the calmest ocean and in a storm surpassing the wrath of all others. The sea was smooth now—for the sea. But this breaker was muttering something of its own.

It came edging toward the life-boat along the parallel of the tamer waves, crawling across the dark with the clumsy menace of a reptile ashore, hissing and baring its fangs.

If the steersman had been really awake he could have avoided it or met it fairly. But it struck the boat amidships. It smote the whole company with spray, but they were used to that. It drenched Mrs. Parcot, but she only clung a little more tightly to her child. She did not wake.

Alice lay outstretched on one of the thwarts, her baby lightly held in her relaxed arms. As the boat careened in the deep trough of the wave Alice slid across the edge, the baby rolled along her lap. And then it was as if the wave thrust grisly, frothy arms into the boat and snatched the child from the mother's hands.

Alice, only half waking, groped for him as when he strayed from her embrace in bed. The wave held him just



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beyond her reach as the boat rose with a lurch over the crest. When the boat slipped down again, Alice, still half asleep, clutched for the child and missed—clutched again and caught him by one arm. Then, as in the old German poem, half she followed him, half he dragged her into the depths.

If she cried out, the water smothered her cry. The wave purred and spun about her as she sank. Perhaps her hand went up through her hair, perhaps her hair merely seethed like thick seaweed and then was slowly withdrawn as she went down and down into the oceanic night.

She was one of those whom misfortune had selected for its very own. Innocent, meek, unresisting, without even the debit of a little wild happiness, she had known the extremes of horror, of shame, of remorse, and had come to that woeful epitaph—"Better dead."

Her son that brought so much anguish in his brief life ended before he began what history he might have made in the world. It was his fate to revenge himself only on the mother who brought him so unwillingly into the world and would have followed him so willingly out—if she had known that she was going. Her wish to die was her only granted wish.

She and her child joined the *Lusitania* flock of American women and children strangled to death in the sea by German wiles, and calling from the ooze for a reckoning. Two years and a half later the waves would be beating the Irish coast with the bodies of American soldiers from the *Tuscania* sunk by the submarines of the still-unconquered Germany.

It was some while after Alice's stealthy departure before her mother stirred and woke to make sure that her baby was warm. Her hands felt for the coverlet that was not there. She looked drowsily about as she gathered her tiny daughter to her breast. She saw Dimny, strangely asleep with Noll's head in her hair. She thought it a fantastic dream.

Her hands went out to caress Alice as her wont had been. They were surprised not to find her. Mrs. Parcot sat up, wondering, musing on the shadowy figures toppled about in



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sleep. A haze was gathering on the sea, rising like a cloud of tulle. At first she could not place herself in any remembered scene. Then she understood and looked again for Alice, and was sorely puzzled at her disappearance. Gradually she realized the truth. She cast her eyes about the starlit ocean, all deeply dark save the gleaming foam of a few rogue waves. Her heart that had suffered so much could still suffer more. She screamed the name of her daughter. The misty dead woke; shuddered, babbled, yawned as they understood. Dimny and Noll threw off the stupor of slumber, questioned her drowsily, stared about the boat and out across the waves and down into it, as if they might find Alice there.

Noll would have dived in to hunt for her, but the crew held him back.

Dimny and her mother could hardly weep, they were so appalled by this last grief.

Noll was the head of the family now. He comforted them with authority and they both clung to him. They wore out the long night murmuring praises of Alice, and regret for her. When the slow dawn rose at last above the barrier of fog, lifted it slowly and let it vanish, it gave them back the horizon, and it brought the vision of a pillar of smoke.

A torpedo-boat destroyer was speeding across the waves to their salvation. It mattered little to the Parcots whether they survived or died, but their neighbors shrieked with joy at being granted a little more life to live.

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## CHAPTER XLIX

STEPHEN PARCOT in the white nullity of Arctic realms where man had not been and where the only evils were the flaws of wind and weather, of ice and icy water, or barren land, had learned to hold nature blameless for her cruelties.

It had not been easy at first to deny the vicious wrath in the blizzards that cabined him in a creaking ship or a snow-smothered igloo for weeks. It had not been easy to watch the ice-packs ravening, leaping, and wolfing for their prey and to deny them malice and hunger.

But he knew that they were merely the driven victims of forces they could not control or shape, and he forgave them since they knew not what they did.

He had attained a partial emancipation also from the theory of devils in the fiendish tempers of his men under the relentless hardships of the north. He smiled at their worst tantrums and was not always loved the better for his God-like calm.

He had been patient even when the ice rose up and crushed his uncrushable ship, and he and his crew were forced to prove by their suffering that the land described on the map had no other existence. He learned anew the pangs of famine and counted a putrified carcass of walrus a banquet. Since there was nothing else to do, and little rifts in their bad luck enabled the most of his party to get home alive, he made the best of the bad matter, ridiculed the wrath of his fellow-professors of zeroölogy, and indulged himself in the luxury of homesickness.

When at length he reached civilization and read the first old newspapers telling of the outbreak of war, he was astounded and aghast; yet he had much to say both against the unreasoning anger of most of his company at Germany



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and against the unreasoning defense of her that certain German members of the expedition made.

He kept a benignly neutral poise midway between the ends of the seesaw. When he reached California and found his people gone, he felt more lonely than on any polar crag. He learned from his bank of their departure for Belgium and of his wife's recent letter asking for money, but telling no news.

Immediately the fate of Belgium ceased to be an academic matter. He had likened it to a small floe of ice caught between great bergs of ice drawn toward each other by a gravity of old antipathies which they had helplessly inherited, and by tempests and currents that no individual had set in motion and none could check.

But the thought of his own poor darlings in that crush drove him into a frenzy. The words one reads with such indifference, "pillage, rapine, excesses, regrettable incidents, atrocities," became words of flaming torment. They meant suddenly and vividly to him what they really mean—what they actually meant to each terror-mad, horrified, bleeding, sobbing, aching, shamefast body and soul that the chronicle lumps up in a cold anonymity.

His waking hours were tortured with imaginings of scenes, his sleep was broken with nightmares where he was a manacled witness of unspeakable deeds.

In a club where he sought refuge from his solitude there was a small bronze of the familiar statue of the gorilla that lugs the naked woman into the jungle despite the futile arrow in his side. Cartoonists had put a helmet on that gorilla and labeled the woman "Civilization." To Stephen Parcot the beast was not a symbol, but a brute, and the struggling woman was not an allegory, but now his daughter, now his wife.

He sent his cablegram to his wife in care of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and went to New York to meet the answer half-way. When it came with its lying cheerfulness he flung himself on his hotel bed, weeping aloud with relief, and slipping to his knees to sob out prayers of thanks to the merciful God.

The world was a better place to breathe in now, and he



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forgave the Germans much because they had spared his own. His only torment now was impatience to take his three graces into his arms again. The cablegram that they had sailed sent him into the clouds of rapture and of anxiety lest the sea, which he knew too well, might claim what the Germans had missed.

He walked the streets the next day, looking into the windows and making purchases of gifts for his loves, extravagant gifts that he could not afford—the only kind of gifts that satisfy love.

His comfortable eyes caught the head-lines on an evening paper that an inarticulate news-howler was thrusting at a passer-by. It told of the sinking of the ship that carried his people.

There was no further news than this, but a word that rescue ships had been despatched and that many had died.

He fled from the streets to the solitude he was most used to, and a blizzard of visions stormed through his brain. He gave up hope, and all the pitiful remonstrance he could make was to hunt out the medal the Kaiser had pinned on his proudly swelling breast, and to fling it to the floor and trample it, then to write the Kaiser a letter of fierce abhorrence and send the medal to the German Ambassador with the assurances of his undying contempt.

That gave him small comfort, but it did relieve his past of one stain.

There was no more word till the next morning, and then only a brief list of the known dead. Neither Mrs. Stephen Parcot, nor either of the Misses Parcot, appeared on that list, and he took a little hope. The name of Mrs. Judson and her child Benoni meant nothing to him.

That night there were fuller stories, including an account of the bringing in of the boat-load containing Mrs. Parcot and her daughter Dimny, and describing the death of Mrs. Parcot's other daughter, Mrs. Judson, and her child, as already reported.

This bewildered him while it broke his heart. He was distracted further to read that Mrs. Parcot's baby, only a few months old, had survived.

What could that mean? Alice must, then, have married



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a year ago, but who was her husband and where was he? She was too young to have married, yet younger to be a mother, and all too young to have died.

And his wife—her child—a few months old! Wild dreads and wild jealousies were followed by mad self-reproach. He tried to compute the time and prove the baby his, but the great mathematician could not add or subtract. This famous astronomer was baffled by the calendar.

Then came another cable from Dimny. It said:

Mother and your baby safe poor Alice lost we sail to-morrow Tuscania. Love Dimny.

He wept and laughed. The words "your baby" gave him comfort that shamed him while it blessed. Then he wondered if Dimny referred to herself. He had always called her his baby.

As day followed day and night night, his soul in the igloo of his skull weathered the fiercest storms and attained at last a calm, whether of mere fatigue or philosophy.

He resolved that whatever the truth might be, his wife had suffered enough and that no word of his, nor even a look of doubt, should give her pain instead of the perfect love he owed her. If she could not look to him for shelter, where could she hope for it? If she must come to him as to a judge, what was the use of love at all?

If the child were not his, at least she was coming home to him, she must want him. He would not fail her. His heart was freed of its poisons and he could grieve cleanly for Alice. He wondered who her husband was, and his heart went out to the poor stranger whom she must have loved well indeed to marry him. He wondered why she had left him, or why he did not come along. Perhaps he had been killed in battle. He wondered and wore himself down till his flogged brain could not even wonder more.

At last the ship came in that brought his people home. He met them on the pier. Reporters fought with him for their first words, but he brushed them away. He was big and fierce and they retreated before the flail of his arm.

It was such a pride to Dimny and her mother to have a



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champion of their own against the world and its cruelty of curiosity, that they forgot the substitute they had found in Noll Winsor.

He saw them fling themselves about the giant and saw his long arms envelop them. Then Noll went his way, feeling useless, forsaken, superfluous.

Just after he trudged across the gang-plank Dimny remembered him. She called to him, but he had vanished.

She explained to her father: "I wanted you to meet Noll. He has been so good to us. He—"

Her father stared at her with a childish pain of fear. "Good Lord! You're not going to marry somebody, are you, and leave me no child at all?" He caught himself and apologized to the baby cooing in his wife's arms. "Forgive me, you sweet pink thing."

He took the baby to his own heart and led the way to an automobile. The infant optimist that had chortled while the ship sank, and had found the life-boat a lullaby, made no difficulty about the clenched arms of this big stranger.

The baby warmed the heart of the man like a live coal. In the seclusion of the motor he paid a tribute of grief to Alice and tried to stifle the outcry in his own heart against that murder, and to appease the ache in his wife's eyes, by mumbling:

"God sent us this little one to take the poor child's place."

This word had a strange influence on his wife. Her eyes ran away from his with a sudden alarm, and all his doubt came back. The baby in his arms was a live coal indeed. But he must needs hold it till they reached the hotel.

In that long ride his thoughts were jolted back to their old resolution. He was too big a man to fight that little handful of flesh or to be afraid of it. Its chuckles touched the primeval springs of laughter. Its flapping, mittened hands and its two feet kicking as one in the swaddling wraps amused him irresistibly, and for all his gloom he was speaking to it:

"You're not a human baby; you're a little pink seal. Your mother must have found you out on the ice. Do you want me to chuck you back into Baffin Bay?"



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He made a pretense of tossing it out of the window. Its cluck and gurgle of laughter brought it back to his breast. He listened to its inarticulate conversation, and said:

"That's the purest Eskimo I ever heard spoken."

He laughed across the mystery to his wife and saw her cowering backward and staring at him with guilty terror. He stared and groaned:

"Alma! honey! You're not afraid of me, are you?"

He sent out his long arm for her and drew her close and kissed her briny cheeks. And these tears were the first that she had shed that did not burn.

The car that was speeding them through crowded streets might have been a comet sweeping through the stars, for all she knew. She put her arms about her husband. They closed their wet eyes and clung together for one long while, like young mates communing over their first-born.

Dimny felt quite out of the nest. She worshiped them both, but her childhood was over.

At the hotel she left them to themselves. Through the muffling door between her room and theirs she heard her mother weeping, her father groaning in tenderness or in rage, and she knew that she was giving him her history to share.

At the end of it he came into Dimny's room, looking as if a great tempest had cast him ashore, bruised and worn and haggard, but unconquered.

"Dimny," he said, "I want you to know that your mother has told me everything—including what you've done, you God-blessed brave little angel." He bent and kissed her and she had her reward in his love.

She hugged him ferociously and praised him for being—himself—the best of men, a God on earth. She gave him much daughterly adoration, and he fled this. He said:

"I've got nothing in my heart but pity and love for your mother. I've got everything in my heart for Germany but pity and love."

When he left her she felt a loneliness beyond endurance. She wondered where Noll Winsor was, why he had abandoned her on this desert shore of America.



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She looked down from her window into the streets of New York, flashing, glowing with sunlight, and brilliant with swarms of people and not a bayonet or a bread-line in view.

Twilight came as she watched, remembering her vigils in forlorn Brussels. She remembered how Noll Winsor had knocked on her door there once, and had implored her not to cry. Where was he now?

Suddenly the electric lights in the streets flashed into glory. From where she stood she could not see Broadway, but only the milky glimmer it threw into the sky.

The war had not reached this country, but it must come. She felt that the time would arrive when that glittering Broadway would be dark, when the streets would be full of uniforms, when the ships would put forth thronged with soldiers, when the lists of dead and wounded would blot the papers every day, when the wounded and maimed, the blind and the dazed, would come home, when hunger and perplexity and desperation would fill the land and the sea.

Dimny felt that nothing could save the world from Germany but America—America vast and slow to wrath, but terrible once awake. She felt that she had her mission in life.

Here in this luxurious tower above this gleaming city she felt the spirits of war calling to her as plainly as Joan of Arc heard them among the apple-trees in Domremy.

In these days there would be nothing wonderful about a girl astride a horse and going to war. Thousands of them were in and near the battle-fields of Europe, and in Russia the Battalion of Death would soon be meeting annihilation with fire.

As Dimny saw herself pleading with her country not to lag abed in sloth, but to rise and save the threatened earth, she heard the telephone ring.

She became again for a while what she had had so little chance and time to be—a young girl harkening to the cry of love.

She ran to the telephone and heard the voice she hoped it was, groaning:



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"Is that you?"

"Yes, Noll dear."

"Thank God! I've telephoned to every other hotel in the world, I think. Wouldn't it be my luck to telephone this one last?"

"I was just going to begin to telephone to all of them for you."

"Honestly?"

"Honestly."

"Had your dinner?"

"No."

"Could you dine with me?"

"I suppose so."

"I want to see you before I take the train."

"The train! What train?"

"I telegraphed my mother that I'd take the midnight. She'd never forgive me if I didn't."

"Neither would I."

"Will you miss me a little?"

"Not a bit."

"Oh! I'm sorry."

"I'm not, for I'm going with you."

"What?"

"Of course I am. I've just lost my mother, and I'm going to steal yours."

"Dimny! Good Lord! I'm in a telephone-booth like a solitary cell. I can't talk to you from here."

"It seems rather foolish to try to."

"Good-by!"

There was a click before her good-by could be uttered.

She went to the window and stared down into the street, wondering which one of the taxicab roofs gliding up to the hotel door would be his.

So many came and went and such distorted grotesques escaped from them that she failed to recognize Noll when he arrived. He had knocked at her door several times before she drew her head in from the window.

She ran to admit him. He had been so afraid that she had vanished from him as once before that he stared at her now and made no move in her direction. She



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took his hat and coat from him and put them down, and turned.

It was still—even in that advanced day—the habit of women to wait for their men to begin the embracing. But Noll had been frightened off. He could think of nothing glorious enough to say. He said:

"Have you heard the war news?" Dimny snubbed him flatly.

"No, and I don't want to. We've had enough of it for a while. There's plenty of it ahead. We've got a right to a little respite—just a few days' reprieve, haven't we?"

He laughed comfortably and nodded and was about to sink into a chair, a small, frail comfortless hotel chair.

Dimny felt an irresistible urge to be strong, since he was so weak; to be bold, since he was so timid. She would not let him deny her what she had so long denied him and herself.

She went to him with the authority of a bride, took his hands and drew his arms about her, built herself a nest in his embrace. When he understood, he left her no reason to complain of his strength.

They had seen much wretchedness together and more was to come. They had resolved to devote themselves to the freedom of Belgium and they could not dream how completely the freedom of their own people was to become involved. They could hardly have borne the knowledge of what was in store for the world. The butcheries of 1914 and 1915 seemed to be all that mankind could endure. Their imaginations were spared, for the time, the vision of the vaster tragedies of the years that followed, beating upon the anvil of history like the sledges of doom, 1916, 1917, 1918—crushing the delicate, the glittering, the exquisite, everything that was crystalline, and making steel of all that survived the hammer.

Youth in love and in mutual embrace demanded its little smiling-while of tenderness and put away the facts and the omens that marred the perfection of its union. Youth in love mocked the future with the brave impertinence, "Cheer up, the worst is yet to come."



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From the tower of their window they looked out upon a city at peace and a country soothed with prosperity. The sky was troubled with flickerings of lightning and the presages of storm, but these two were imparadised in their own world, snatching a draught of happiness before they took up the harness of war, the first war that men and women waged in partnership. There would be a certain noble frightful happiness in it, too.

But that was the future's business. Their moment was the primeval inalienable hour of love.

Out in the mid-West there was also a grace of rapture, for an old, old woman rocking alone on a porch in the twilight, and wishing that her son would come home, heard footsteps hurrying along the walk under the black trees. A shadowy messenger brought her a telegram.

She could not see to read it in the gloaming, and she was afraid to go in and read it alone. She asked the boy to tell her what it said. He lighted matches and read it haltingly in uncouth dialect, but he was like a darkling angel in her eyes, for he told her that her son was coming home. She knew that sons come home to go away again, but all she asked, for now, was that her boy was coming home.

THE END

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